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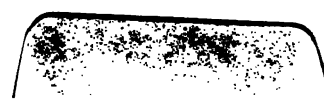

ONE WORLD AT A TIME

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ONE WORLD AT A TIME

A CONTRIBUTION TO

THE INCENTIVES OF LIFE

BY

THOMAS R. SLICER

How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy!

BROWNING'S *Saul*

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
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A FOREWORD TO THE READER

THIS book is not written for people who are satisfied either with their religious opinions or with their doubt of other people's religious opinions. It is sent out as a contribution to the incentives of life for those who feel that life is not very much worth while, and who, in consequence, are looking forward to another life, while missing the joy of this; or else, are dealing in a sluggish way with the ordinary experiences of life, not much caring whether it is worth while now or anything is to follow. The writer believes that life is very much worth while; that a beautiful life may be lived in God's good world on terms consistent with self-respect, and increasingly satisfying as life unfolds and the beauty of God's good world is more and more borne in upon the mind and heart.

Of course, the book is written from the standpoint of a believer in the good news of God which the Unitarian faith announces; but it is far more interesting to think of the

multitude of those who hold this faith without knowing it, than it is to imagine that any additions shall be made to Unitarianism by a fresh accession of disciples because of anything that appears here. There are in America about five hundred Unitarian churches; but there are so many unconfessed and unconscious Unitarians in all the churches and outside of all the churches that, if a census should be taken, the way of looking at life that is called Unitarian would probably have a larger constituency than any of the so-called evangelical faiths.

It is in this conviction that this appeal is made to the reader. It is not an appeal in the interest of a body of doctrine, but of a way of looking at life. The author has often been asked by persons curious as to the working of the human mind, why it is that, with a long ancestry of the ministry, called evangelical, behind him, he thought it worth while twenty years ago to separate himself from the communion of the orthodox churches and start again in the ministry of a free faith. This book is the answer to many such questions. These questions are not construed as personal to the writer, but as due to a natural curiosity and to real interest in the state of mind of one

who, being upon what seemed to be a perfectly safe sailing craft, preferred to go overboard and swim ashore. It is hoped that proof is given here of what was found on landing; and since the world grows increasingly beautiful, and life adds evermore to its charm, the author is bold to address you directly in the hope that if the aspect of life is to you pale and ineffectual, it may flush with new feeling; if the uncertainties of the mind are burdensome, they may be reassured; and if in a lonely and unbefriended way you have been working out for yourself a philosophy of life in terms of a freer faith and larger hope, it may be seen here that there is a great company who find in that freer faith and larger hope an illumination and joy.

The title, "One World at a Time," is not in any sense to be construed negatively. It affirms "the life that now is," in the faith that if the life that now is can be made strong and gracious and full of delight, the suggestion that it shall ever end will be the last one the mind can be brought to entertain. It is good to be alive; but that it may seem as good as it ought, it is important to focus the interest of life well in the foreground and near the experience of to-day. It is hoped that no one

will be disturbed by these pages to the hurt of his peace; but it is necessary for the truth to be told always (the truth as it is understood by him who speaks), and it is necessary for one to be sufficiently disturbed to be awake, in order to hear it.

THOMAS R. SLICER.

CHURCH OF ALL SOULS,
NEW YORK.

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ONE WORLD AT A TIME

CHAPTER I

THE SCEPTIC

THE man who never had a doubt never had a mind. Given a mind, a doubt must at some time or other invade it, for the reason that the sceptic is the inquirer. We do not inquire as to that we already know—we inquire where we are in doubt. The inquirer's business is to find things out; and for the most part, he finds things out for the other man who does not care to find them out. The result is that two classes have been concerned with the bettering of the human mind in its attitude toward the greatest realities,—the sceptic, who has kept the air clear about the fires of devotion, and the mystic, who has fed the fires with fresh fuel that they may flame. These two,—the one who provides the atmosphere of crystalline clearness of inquiry; the

other who provides the sacrifices upon the altars of devotion,—these two have been most concerned with the progress of religious thought.

The sceptic is the inquirer. His inquiry addresses itself to three distinct subjects. For instance, he is conscious of himself. He is a being. Naturally, unless he is content simply to accept his animal sensations, he has to inquire what that being is. He is placed as a being under conditions of life, and unless he is content simply to stay where he dropped, he has to inquire what those conditions are, and whether they can be bettered. He is conscious of himself and his environment. He has a third question pressing upon his attention. It is the question, What is to become of me? He wants to know whether he is to be snuffed out like a candle, never to be relighted; he wants to know whether there is any other world; he wants to know what the conditions are that now guarantee to him a hold on life that cannot be killed. He wants to know these things. So, the sceptic, if he has a mind; if he is not simply a doubting machine. There are intellectual outfits that seem not to be minds; they are mere interrogation points; if you were to take a magni-

fying glass of great power and take off the skull-cap over the brain of that kind of man, I suppose you would find the grey matter of his brain covered over with little interrogation points; and they would be so knitted together that they would have taken the place of the free matter in his brain. Your chronic doubter is like the chronic complainer. He asks questions for ever as the other man sighs and groans for ever. But the real sceptic—the man who is a real inquirer, who "wants to know," as the Yankees say—is out on a voyage of discovery; he perhaps does not know whither his ship is going, because we sail the sea of life under sealed orders, and get far out into the deep before we realise which way we are heading, and what our destiny is; presently we pass over some degree of latitude or longitude that indicates whether we are going north or south or east or west and whither our general direction is likely to take us; but if he is a real voyager, he is more concerned with the ship than he is with the destination. He understands, in the first place, that the anchor is not the whole equipment of a ship. There are people who continually say to you, "Why do you go on asking questions, inquiring, raising these doubts?" We do not raise them;

they are raised in us by the very condition of things that confronts us, whether in ourselves, our environment, or our destiny. We are told if we go on raising these doubts, entering into inquiry, we will lose our moorings! Think of that being said of a full-rigged ship! Lose its moorings! That is the thing it means to do. It means to have its anchor up and sails spread and helm held with a steady hand, its compass true and its bow cutting the sea before it as it goes. That is the description of a ship that is on the business that belongs to the great deep. Lose its moorings! There are ships that never have lost their moorings in years, and the scum hangs on their sides and barnacles have gathered on their bottoms, and their copper is eaten through, and their timbers are rotten. They have not a sail that is not mildewed. They have not a chart that is not a hundred years old. They have not a compass that will stand the slightest presence of any deflecting agency near it. That is the condition of a water-logged human mind. Now the sceptic is not always wise—I shall not defend him under all conditions; but I say that the sceptic is an essential element in human society, and his business is to inquire and to have it out with himself, with his environ-

ment, and with the questions of his day. Keep those three things in view, if you please, while I am trying to outline the condition of the mind that I am now describing.

For instance, the inquirer wants to know, as to his being, whether he is a mechanism or whether he is a spirit. You have to determine whether you are a body carrying around a soul, as Emerson says, "like a fire in a pan," or whether you are a soul equipped with a body for the holiest uses. That is the question that is before you as to your being. You have to determine whether man has a body and himself is a spirit; or whether man is a body without a spirit. For practical purposes you can determine that. "The body without a spirit is a corpse. The spirit without a body is a ghost." It is the combination that makes a man. But when you have said that you have only said an epigrammatic thing. The problem still arises, What is due to each of these? Shall I put all my forces upon the spiritual life and live as a spirit should; or shall I put all my weight upon the bodily life and live as an animal must live? For the fact is, the peace of life and the power of life depend upon the place we give these two elements of our being. Given the body as the sum of our concern, you

can grow a brute that will be a splendid model for a sculptor, but he would not make a nurse for a sick child. Given the whole emphasis laid upon the spirit and the body neglected, you get what would serve as a significant specimen in morbid anatomy. The probability is that he will have visions of the right that the brutal man never had, but the difficulty with him is he will not have locomotive power enough to carry his vision around. So you see the real business of life for the sceptic is to inquire what he owes his body and his spirit; and, since he is made up of these two elements, to live his life on terms that will bring the best union between the two.

First, his being. The sceptic has to inquire what he shall do with it. Now the problem having been set, how much he owes his flesh and how much he owes his spirit; having determined, perhaps, as Browning said, "that flesh helps soul," the sceptic has to inquire how he can get the best out of himself. For the fact is, the business of life is the investing ourselves at the highest rate of interest. One man takes it in terms of work, another man in terms of joy, another man in terms of neither work nor joy, but just plain, unadulterated worry. He joins a "Don't

Worry" Club, and then has nervous prostration. The trouble was not with the club; it was with the applicant who went to join it. He had fallen into a chronic condition of nerves. Everything hit them on the ends and nothing laterally. Now nerves played on laterally will make music like any other stringed instrument. But with the irritated ends exposed from the finger-tips to the soles of the feet,—a man in that condition is only fit to be wrapped in cotton and taken care of by some good woman.

I hope to prove to you before I get through, at least in a sufficiently conclusive way to make a working-theory, that *the business of religion is to add zest to life.* If it does not do that it does not do much. If you have only enough religion to be thoroughly miserable you had better get rid of the little that you have, and start in business again with better capital for which there is a fairer market. The sceptic's inquiry is, How can I make the most out of myself? How put myself to the highest uses? So when we deal with the being of man, we deal with it in the attitude of scepticism. If we do not do this we shall simply sink into a flaccid and pulseless condition which will miss the very joy of life.

But the sceptic also has to do, as I have said, with his place in life. He has to inquire whether it is a fit place; whether the environment is right. Let me quote to you a saying of Herbert Spencer, which is for its purpose as good scripture as that which was written eighteen hundred or two thousand years ago. Herbert Spencer says, "If there were no changes in the environment except such as there were adapted changes to meet in the thing environed, that would be eternal peace and eternal life." That is true. That is, if you could build up tissue as fast as it broke down, you would have constant being; if you could feed in fuel as fast as you exhausted it, in running a machine, you would have perpetual motion. For instance, mechanics know that on every machine sit two little sprites, one Rust and the other Friction. Rust says to the machine, "If you stop I will eat you up." Friction says, "If you keep going I will wear you out." That is exactly what happens in the human creature. His study is to get himself into such relation to his environment that he can run at the greatest speed without loss of structure, without a breaking down of the mechanism; or rest in most complete quietude without danger of rusting out.

That is what we mean by adjustment to environment.

What happens in the Church as the result of this? In the Church men grow restless under conditions of their birth and training, and they begin to move uneasily, just as birds do in the nest when they feel their wing-feathers coming. The bird knows perfectly well that he does not belong in the nest for ever. He sees the flitting of other birds full-fledged upon the wing. The little thing that was hatched in the nest chipped its shell and was a most outrageous looking thing when it came into the world. It had no feathers; it was just a little blob of meat; it never suspected it would ever sing. There it is in the nest; but there comes a time when the pin-feathers begin to grow. The longer feathers follow. Then the wings begin to get a little plumage upon them, and finally are covered. Then there comes a day when it sits on the edge of the nest and falls out, but it does not do that many times. The mother finds it on the ground — this little helpless thing, scared because it has fallen out of the nest. She encourages it to hop a little, to flutter its wings a little, until presently it gets upon the wing and goes from twig to twig—to go back into the nest?

Never. Not until next year when it has a brood of its own and eggs to sit upon and song-birds to hatch out. Next year it will go into some other nest that it has made; but for this year it is on the wing. That is the condition of the sceptic who finds himself born into a set of beliefs that he cannot possibly hold, if he would fly. Now he simply tumbles out of the nest and wallows around in the dust at the foot of the tree. The fall from the nest was because he did not understand flight; and you and I in shifting our relations to the things we have been taught get many a fall and bruise by it. God knows how sore we are some days when we have been beaten down below the point of faith and hope, and feel as if "the heavens were rolled together like a scroll to be unread for ever." Let him not disturb himself, this fledgling of the nest of inherited belief. There shall come a day when, by the example of those that have learned flight before him, and encouraged by those that have learned to sing that were in their nests before him, he shall flutter his wings and lift himself, and know the beautiful and splendid experience of being, not a bird on the ground, but a bird in the air. You remember those lines of Victor Hugo:

"Let us be like a bird, a moment lighted
Upon a twig that swings;
He feels it sway; but sings on unaffrighted,
Knowing he has his wings!"

That is the whole story. The sceptic that only knows how to fall out of the nest has not learned much. He must learn how to fly in his native element.

So with society. People who are busy with the work of life complain that they are not satisfied with their surroundings. They are sceptical as to their environment. You say you think Lessing was wrong when he insisted that this was the best possible world. Being a true sceptic, you say instead, This is the best possible world up to date, but "tomorrow is another day." It is another day, and if the world does not rise to meet it, then it is not the best possible world; for every day must bring not only its discontent, but its betterment. It is the business of the inquirer to see to it that he fits the environment of the day so well that, like the beetle whose shell you find upon the trunk of the tree, he shall burst it and find wings. That is the business of life — growing to your environment, and then changing it by the expansion of the human mind. I have very little concern with

discontent upon the part of those who are discontented with other men's discontent. I say that the struggle of soul that comes to the social state is the salvation of that social state—that there is nothing so bad for the great mass of men and women as to be pulseless, content, sordid, mere lumps of humanity, dropped where they fall, and content to stay where they drop. There is a divine discontent moving in every great nation's heart, by virtue of which it becomes a greater nation; in the heart of every social state, by which the social state is bettered; and the business of the sceptic is to find the conditions under which he lives, and to make them better. For instance: The Tenement-House Commission, studying conditions of city life among the poor, convicts the Building Department of the city of neglect and violation of law. Do you suppose it was the business of the Tenement-House Commission to do that? It was their opportunity. It was their duty. But the business lay with the tenant. He should have been discontented to have an air-shaft that substituted inches for feet. He should have been discontented to have cubic feet of space insufficient for the breathing of God's good air. He should have been discontented to live

in rooms that had no approach to the external air. Why, if you were not restless enough to change your place, your mind would fall sick and feeble, as a body gets bed-sores lying supine wherever it may be placed! Salvation of society lies in the struggle of society for the social betterment.

I will not touch the question of destiny now. That belongs in the discussion of the next chapter, which deals with the agnostic. He knows all about it—or does not know all about it. I am going to deal with him as Izaak Walton says about the minnow, "Put him upon the hook as though you loved him." I think I can show that he has, as the sceptic has, his place in the sum of things, and has done vastly better than he is commonly credited with doing.

Now, what are the conditions under which scepticism appears?

All progress in science is made by discrimination. What would be the use of the science of microscopy unless you could distinguish between the white and red corpuscles of the blood; between those things that in a general way we sum up as microbes, which we fear and call by bad names? Scientific advance is made, as John Fiske says, when men come

to see dissimilarity against a background of uniformity. We know the stars in the sky because they hang out dissimilar against a background of black in the night. The uniform background throws their brilliancy forward in differing radiance to the eye of the observer. All progress is made by discrimination ; and discrimination is the business of the sceptic. For instance, the sceptic is usually the man who, in advance of his time, if he be serious, finds himself holding a losing cause. Socrates was the most believing man in the Greek lands, and they called him an atheist. That is, he was so much an inquirer that he was discontent with little gods, and wanted a god great enough for the soul that entertained him. And if you will read the *Dialogues* of Plato where Socrates is represented as speaking, you will be struck with the fact that the questioner is really the man of faith. It is the friends who are about him who are nervous about his condition. Take that splendid passage in the Dialogue where Socrates discourses upon his death. He is about to drink the hemlock. He who believed in God ; has been condemned to death as an atheist, as a corrupter of youth, who simply taught them to know themselves at their best. We see

him sitting there—a quaint, squat figure, with curious physiognomy, the very face seeming to be one great interrogation—and someone says to him during a pause in the conversation, "Socrates, where shall we bury thee?" He looks about upon them, and finding the questioner, Crito, says: "Crito, have I been so long with you, yet do you speak of burying Socrates? You shall bury me if you can catch me. But when you have buried my body, do not say that you have buried Socrates." This is the man who was condemned to death because he did not believe; yet that inquiring spirit was really the only profound believer in the group. For inquiry is essential to real faith. Luther was inquiring, labouring up the great stair at Rome upon his knees, when there sounded a voice to him saying, "The just shall live by faith." Read your New Testament, and see if in all the pages of history there be so radical an inquirer as Jesus of Nazareth. We speak of him in the terms the theologians teach us. We speak of him in terms the doctrinal teachings have inspired. But when we begin to read the book for ourselves, what do we find? We find exactly the same spirit that was common in the prophets of his own race,—Amos, Nahum, Hosea, and

Joel. We call them the minor prophets; they were really the great statesmen of Israel. We find in Jesus the same spirit. He confronts those about him with such a statement as this: "Ye have heard it said, 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.' I say unto you, Resist not evil." That was his practical challenge to the ancient past. Mark those two sceptics as they face each other,—Pilate, the bullet-headed Roman, heavy in the jowl and thick in the neck, set upon the precarious throne in Jerusalem, and standing before him this simple working-man, Jesus of Nazareth, charged with sedition. Pilate asks, "Art thou a king?" They had been saying, "We have brought to you a king; so he calls himself." I can see in my mind that figure hardened by work, a young man, a little over thirty years of age, a Galilean carpenter, straightening himself before the throne that represented the power of the Roman world, his hands bound together and the rude sceptre between them in mock sovereignty, and upon his shoulders the cloak of some Roman soldier, cast there in derision, —I can see him straighten himself before the Roman procurator and say, when asked, "Art thou a king?" "For this end was I born, for this cause came I into the world, that I should

bear witness to the truth. Thou sayest it. I am a king." Pilate, the sceptic of the other type, says, "What is truth?" He turns away without an answer, expecting none, and goes to give judgment against his prisoner. That is the sceptic for whom the world has no use, and who is only remembered, or largely remembered, by virtue of the man whom he condemned. The real inquirer into the truth of things and the secret of Being is a sceptic of quite another kind.

Let me name two or three conditions which the sceptic who is the true inquirer—the man who asks questions and wants them answered—is to observe, if his scepticism would lead to life.

The first is, that he shall never shirk the responsibility of the answer. Now, a man who is simply flipping questions as to his being, his environment, and his destiny, without expecting any answer, who likes the mental agitation, does not care for the responsibility that his question raises. The true inquirer never asks a question the answer to which he is not willing to hear. It is the very essence of his courage. I remember a splendid man, self-educated, who came to be the President of the Board of Trustees of a great university, a man

of business and great affairs, who said to me, "I was taught that God was a God of wrath. I was taught that there was such a place as a cureless hell. I was taught this and this and this," reciting the horrible details of instruction in his youth, "and I worried myself with inquiries as to how this could be; how I could love a God who was not lovable; how I could care for a God who could consign those I loved to endless ruin. And one night, tortured until early morning by these inquiries of my doubting spirit, I made up my mind that if God was a Being of that sort, He might do just what He pleased with me, but I would never love Him; and I turned over and went to sleep." He took the responsibility of his inquiry, and satisfied himself, not with the answer, but that the answer could not be inconsistent with the sanity and sanctity of human nature. So the responsibility that comes with the inquiry must never be shirked. Otherwise you had much better not ask the question. You had much better be satisfied where you are. Inquiring what you are, be satisfied just to know you are alive and no more. Inquiring where you belong, that you are just where you are put, and no other where. Inquiring what is to become of you, put your

hand in somebody's hand, and ask him to look out for you as you go through the deep waters. There is no other way unless you are willing to take the responsibility of the inquiry. It is a serious matter to raise a doubt in your own mind, unless you are going to follow it to the end. The other sort of man is what we mean by the "doctrinaire." He appears in all fields of inquiry in the scientific and the practical world as the theorist. I was once with a number of people who were all going down to the shore together, and somebody remembered that one of the young men in the party probably was not safe in the water. He said to him, "Can you swim?" The young man answered with perfect calmness, "I understand the theory of swimming." We did not let him take to the water. We kept him on shore, because the man who "knows the theory of swimming" belongs on land. It is the condition of inquiry that you shall follow it clear through, not in the doctrinaire spirit, the spirit of the theorist, but in the spirit of the practical, hard-headed inquirer, dealing with life as the most serious thing we have to deal with. Why, what is your business compared with your being? What is your daily occupation compared with the

betterment of your environment? Is there any question so serious as the question of the destiny that awaits you? What are you fit for? I say to you in absolute confidence, The thing you are fit for, you will get. You do not believe that you will get it here? No, not always. Daily destiny does not apparently take the lines of fitness. But I have known thousands of people, and most of those that did not get placed in life had not prepared themselves for any place. I admit the artificiality of society. I admit the unnaturalness of some of the conditions. I admit the fact that sometimes men have not the opportunity that other men have, and men are not equal in opportunity or power. But, I believe, given a good body and a good brain, the whole business of life is making one's self fit. Destiny takes care of itself.

The second condition is, not only that he shall not avoid the responsibility of the answer, but that he shall not shun the struggle of soul. If the sceptic is a serious inquirer, if he is an inquirer intent upon the answer, not afraid what the answer shall be, prepared to take his share of the risk of having raised the question, then he must not shun the struggle of soul. It is struggle of body that brings

health. It is struggle of mind that brings intelligence. It is the faculty of thought exercised that makes it easy to think and a delight to think. *It is struggle of soul that saves.* "We must so trust the order of Nature as to believe that whatever questions the universe inspires us to ask, the universe can answer." So said Ralph Waldo Emerson. Someone said to Father Taylor, the Methodist chaplain of seamen in Boston, when Emerson had uttered such a sentiment, "He is a wonderful man, but he will surely go to hell." Father Taylor had a kind of mild belief in the pit, I suppose, but he turned to the man who said Emerson would go to that place and answered, "If Emerson should go to hell, he would make a change in the climate, and migration would set that way." As to this view of destiny what has happened? The people who have been consigned to cureless ruin have somehow banked the fires and slowed down the motion of the world's hate.

If the sceptic be serious, not a mere trifler, the final condition he must fulfil is that he shall not shirk the discipline of life. It is of no use for you to go out with a question on your lips unless you will take the responsibility of the answer and be prepared for

struggle of soul—unless, above all things else, you are willing to stand up to the discipline of life. Suppose a conviction seizes upon a man's mind that a certain course of life is the only one for him to follow; he may be a doubter as to the social standard; perhaps all society is running the other way; perhaps the whole trend of mind about him is taking another course. He may be utterly wrong, mistaken, but his mind is dealing with things at first hand. To him that course seems to be the only course to take. Let him hold that course to the end. It may be that he shall find, as we do in the Adirondack and Maine waters, that he has only taken a short cut across the bend, and comes out with his companions who have gone a more circuitous way around. He has found the short cut to the end; and conviction, and resolution, and struggle of soul, and sense of responsibility, and verve and power and energy of the individual mind have driven him through obstacles that would have impeded men of more timid soul.

We must take the discipline of life. It is a splendid thing to stand up and take your punishment if you have invited it. I know a man whom I greatly revere, who is distinguished in his profession, a man of great capability in the

work in which he is engaged, who in his early life, from this very curiosity and inquiry, made a radical mistake, which he never could correct. He has gained all that he has gained of power and purpose by taking his punishment without whining. There is no place in the world for a whimpering man. We were set squarely on our feet. We were given power and force, clearness of thought, right feeling, and we were given these things that we as part of its creative power might mould the world or fashion it according to the fashion that in our moments of inquiry we have seen, fashioning ourselves together with it by force of our splendid inquiry and conviction.

CHAPTER II

THE AGNOSTIC

THE term "agnostic" has a singular fascination for many minds. It would seem that a term which means "not knowing" would hardly have fascination for a mind the business of which is to know. I suppose that fascination which is exerted by the term arises in part from the association with the distinguished name of Professor Huxley, for it was Professor Huxley who made agnosticism popular and respectable. In the last night of 1856, Professor Huxley, at the very beginning of his fame, sat alone in his study waiting for the birth of his first child. The tension of his mind was stretched over the pains of advent into this life, and he set himself to say to his journal what his ambitions in life should be for the three or four years stretching ahead of that hour. All that was best in him was involved in the holy sacrament of his child's birth, and he wrote in his journal:

"I am resolved to smite all humbugs, however big, to give a nobler tone to science, to set an example of abstinence from petty personal controversies, and of toleration for everything but lying; to be indifferent as to whether the work is recognised as mine or not, so long as it is done."

He had started upon his course, which he went on in the pages of his journal to describe in a German verse of which the translation is in part this:

> "Wilt shape a noble life? Then cast
> No backward glances to the past.
> And what if something shall be lost,
> Act as new-born in all thou dost."

And so on through a verse of noble purpose. Just below this he writes: "Half-past ten at night. I am waiting for the birth of my child. I seem to fancy that it shall be the pledge that all these things shall be." A little farther down he writes: "Born five minutes before twelve. Thank God! New Year's Day, 1857." That is a painful page, as we continue our reading, where, just below, he records in September, 1860, that this same child, "Our Noel" (he was born so near Christmas they gave him the name),

"Our first-born, after being for four years our delight and joy, was carried off with scarlet fever. This day

week he and I had a great romp together. On Friday his restless head with its bright blue eyes and tangle of golden hair, tossed all day upon his pillow. On Saturday night I carried him here into my study and laid his cold, still body here where I write. Here, too, on Sunday night came his mother and I to have the holy leave-taking. My boy is gone; but in a higher and a better sense than was in my mind when I wrote four years ago what stands above, I feel that my fancy has been fulfilled. I say heartily and without bitterness, 'Amen; so let it be.'"

I have quoted these extracts from the journal of a great scientific man, that you may know two or three things about the man with whose history the term "agnostic" is most associated in the popular mind, and those two or three things are: First, that the cause which led him first to declare his agnosticism concerning immortality was a letter of Charles Kingsley, perhaps the noblest man in the English pulpit of that day, who wrote to Huxley trying to comfort him and give him grounds of belief in immortality. Huxley, in the tenderest and kindest way, challenges Charles Kingsley for his proofs, and declares that until some fact like the facts of Nature is presented to him, he must simply say he does not know. The letter is a model at once of manly courage and paternal tenderness, and I could almost wish that the people who claim they know so much

would know as little as Huxley did in that hour of what nobody can know. In saying this, however, I must call your attention to certain limitations upon his statement that appear also in this journal and in the letters. Huxley was not an atheist. He was so much of a scientist that he knew perfectly well that philosophic atheism is impossible. Practical atheism is possible. That is, a man can *live* as though there were no God, but he cannot give a reason for it based on the fact that there is no God. In other words, philosophic atheism has gone out of fashion with the common mind, because the scientific mind, led by men like Huxley, and Spencer, and Darwin, and Wallace, and their co-workers, has given it such proofs of the ordered world as to leave the being of God the most rational solution of that order. So that when Mr. Huxley says of the birth of his child, "Thank God!" he is not in the attitude of the French atheist who said, "I *thank God* that I am an *atheist!*" Mr. Huxley says in another place: "Our true attitude is to sit down like a little child before the facts of Nature and apprehend them on their own ground." And that is the teachable attitude.

I will not trouble you with further extracts

from that wonderful life now just published, but will proceed at once to the discussion of what agnosticism really means, and to the discussion of whether it is a rational state of mind.

I hold, as I said of the sceptic, a brief for the agnostic on certain lines, because the business of every man who professes to be a teacher of the religious life, or a teacher of ethics, or an intelligent man busy with his kind is to try to get the other man's point of view. It is a narrow ledge that has not room for two people to stand on it and see the view together; it must be hard climbing and a perilous poise if there is only room for one. So that the business of life is really to try to get the other man's point of view, to see what he sees. He may see the rush of the stream and say it is a first-class place for the establishment of a mill. I may see it and think that with its rushing stream it is the most beautiful landscape I have ever seen. Another man may see it and say that the watercourse argues rich pasture land in the meadows through which it flows. Each will see it from the standpoint of his attitude; but I am bound to try to understand why one man wants to build a mill, and why the other man

wants to cultivate a farm, when I only want a picture; the difference is between the practical man of affairs and the more practical man, the poet, as I hold. I hope to prove to you that the man who simply insists upon the things that he knows, and declares that he knows he cannot know any more, is not the most practical of men.

The term "agnostic" did not originate with Mr. Huxley. He adopted it, not knowing, I think, that he adopted it from the early Christian Church. Mr. Huxley was not a great theologian. He was not a great student of the early church. If he had been, he would not have given so much attention to the story in the New Testament of the devils which went out of the man and entered into the pigs. The real difficulty in that story is, Who paid for the hogs? I never could believe in the morality of that story because the swine were a dead loss to the owner; and if there are any devils they probably were not drowned; so the whole thing was a loss on all sides. Mr. Huxley was continually quoting this in his Essays, as though it were a sample miracle. I refer to this to show that he was not a great theologian nor a great biblical critic. But the fact is, in the early church, the term

"agnostic" was assumed by a sect in opposition to the "Gnostics," a group of people who appeared in the Eastern Church here and there, of whom not so much is known as one could wish, but who were the "knowing" people, the mystics of their day. The "Agnostics" were the men who claimed that God did not know everything, that He was not omnipresent. So, gradually, the term came to be applied to men as not knowing. Gradually Herbert Spencer took it up and devised out of it the term, "Unknowable," as applied to God. So we get it in all variations. It is a kaleidoscopic term, and yet most men who use it and say, "I am an agnostic," simply mean, "There are some things I do not know, and therefore I will not debate about them." Too often they mean, "There are some things I do not know because they cannot be known." And it behooves them to inquire whether that definition is correct or not; and that is the purpose of this chapter.

Now the position of the scientific mind on the subject is this: nothing can be known except from experience. The idealist and the experientialist, to use the philosophic terms, are opposed the one to the other. The idealist lives in a world of visions. The experien-

tialist lives in a world of experiment. And yet, when you come to analyse the term "experience," it marries itself to a very beautiful poetic idealism. Let me tell you how the term was first used in a way that included both meanings. In the French guilds of artisans, the skilled silver workers and gold workers of the Middle Age, the apprentice worked seven years upon his tasks. When he had wrought out some beautiful thing, perhaps in beaten silver, he brought it to the master of the guild and said, "Behold my *expérience!*" We take over into our English tongue that word "expérience." He meant by it the sum of all his experiments. He had been an apprentice these seven years. He had spoiled many a good bit of metal. He had dulled the edge of many a good tool. He had spent painful days and nights of labour. He had given himself to the work with enthusiasm, but the whole of it was in this little bit of work here—his *expérience*, the sum of his experiments, was there, and upon the acceptance of it by the Master of his Guild, he might take his kit of tools and go out as a journey workman, master of his craft. In other words, the practical workman was proved by the beautiful thing he had done, and the ideal there embodied was

the ideal of his experience there wrought out. The scientific man says, "I can only know by experience." Now I would say, in general terms, that that is true. I have no quarrel with that proposition. I am an idealist and I am an experientialist in the same sense in which I am an individualist and a socialist together. Let me say to my socialistic friends that the solution of their difficulties lies along the line of individualism, as the difficulties of the experientialist may be solved along the line of intelligent idealism. The socialist, when he comes to understand, as I think more and more he is coming to understand, that "society is an organism in which every cell has consciousness," will discover that the health of the tissue depends on the health of the individual cell; so that if he is to have an organic whole that is absolutely in health, he must start with the health of the cell and see to it that no part aches through disease or is lost by dismemberment. So in the other field, the field of experience, the result depends not simply upon the sum of experiences, but on the elements that go to make it up. Have I no experiences but such as come through the senses, or does the union of them in contact with their environment constitute another ex-

perience? I incline to feel that the touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing senses do not sum up the whole experience of life. I know that there is a narrow school of experience to which the most radical agnosticism turns, that says, "You cannot know anything except what you can see, hear, feel, taste, or smell." Well, then, you do not know more than a dog, because he has all those senses. His scent is keener than yours; his hearing is keener than yours; his sight is as good as yours; he is so swift of foot that he can tell the contact of his touch sense with the ground quickly enough to lift his foot and go on, while you have to painfully learn to walk after months of trying. All his senses are more alert than yours. But this man, who claims to belong to the most radical school of agnosticism, and says that he knows nothing that he cannot see, hear, feel, smell, or taste, I think would hardly agree that the sum of life is in the sensations of life; for the reason that, if that were so, one artist would be as good as another. They use the same colours, they handle the same pigments and the same utensils of their art, the same tools of their craft. They see the same view, and they have an equal desire to sell their pictures. Still, it is not true that artists are all alike.

Some artists see Apocalyptic visions such as visited John on Patmos, and others will paint you a portrait of an onion, and think that is a picture. Artists are not alike. Pictures are not alike. I heard of a man the other day who made up his mind that the reason he could not write good poetry was that he did not drink. He said, in general terms, "Now I am a moral man and an abstainer; but, as I read, the great poets—most of them—indulged in liquor, and their best poems were written under the influence of drink." I suppose he had heard about Poe and a few more who were weak in this direction. He told a friend of mine that he determined to write a great poem, so he bought half a pint of whiskey and drank it all. What happened? He went to sleep and did not have a single idea. Poets are not all alike, but they all have the same senses, if not all the same sense. I think we shall have to enlarge the boundaries of what constitutes experience of life, and say that it is not summed up in the five senses. The soul sits central, and caravans come in through the senses, bringing traffic from the outside world. The touch sense drags its caravans forward, the eye sense beckons them near, the ear sense hears their footfall from afar. So through these gateways

the central soul receives the tribute of the world. What does the soul do with it? That is the problem. This is exactly what Browning means when he says that when you strike a chord upon an instrument you do not get another note; you get "a star"—you get something that all the notes have contributed, which the æsthetic sense in the musician recognises as a new thing, and calls it a chord. That is what Emerson meant when he said, "If two and two did not sometimes make five, we never would get on." That is perfectly true. It is the "unearned increment" of the two and two that makes the additional one that makes five. Two and two have gone out at interest and have received their interest in a new conviction, in a new emotion, in a new ideal, in a new sensation, which is a new experience in the mind. This narrowing of experience by the agnostic to the senses, who says that he does not know anything that they do not register, has its parallel in the working-man who comes to you and says with perfect candour and frankness that there is "nothing that makes wealth but labour." He means that; and by labour he means that which takes the strength, that exhausts muscular effort, that wears upon the nerve, that breaks down tissue. He means

work, labour,—"nothing makes wealth but labour." Now, he really believes that. So I turn to him and I say to him, "My dear friend, I sympathise with your wish to exalt labour, but I will take you down here to the East River and show you, what has ceased to be a wonder, the Brooklyn Bridge. The Brooklyn Bridge was a mathematical problem before it ever was a bridge. Every worker in metals knows that a given grade of steel can be estimated to the fraction—the smallest fraction—of weight as to the strain that it will bear for every cubic inch of its length. Every yacht—even the keenest racing-machine—is not on paper first as a diagram and model; it is on paper as a mathematical problem calculated in terms of figures, signs, and mathematical nomenclature; it is a study in mathematics, not a study in labour, before ever a keel is laid, before ever a sheet of iron or steel is forged. The whole thing has sailed the seas of somebody's mind before it sailed the Atlantic. The Brooklyn Bridge hung up complete in the head of the engineer before it ever spanned the East River." You are compelled to enlarge your meaning of labour, just as the agnostic has to enlarge his meaning of experience. Now, if by experience I mean a larger thing than the

senses can reveal, how far shall I carry the meaning of that word before I reach the limit? Well, I am going to carry it into the mind first. I insist that I can grasp a thought, but not with my hand. I insist that I can see a proposition that is not discernible to the eye. I insist that I can hear music that never was on sea or land, and that haunts the chambers of the mind, and is the cause, in those who are competent, of the great oratorios and operas that have been given to the musical world. No eye saw them; no ear heard them; no hand touched them. They were regnant in the soul of the composer. A competent musician will take the score, the orchestration of such an opera, and, with the mere score in his hand, sit and hear the whole orchestration without an instrument being present. Is that an experience? I hold that it is; and if a man comes in and says, "There is no music except what the violins make with the accompanying instruments," I turn to him as that great musician would, and say to him, "The concert pitch is not in the instrument, it is in the mind; and we know when the orchestration is in perfect accord by the registry of the consciousness in terms of thought, and not simply in terms of the auditory nerve." Take the eye as an il-

lustration. I want to get my agnostic on the plane of intellect, and away from the plane of the senses. Take the eye as an instrument. The eye is a thing to see through; it is not a thing to see with. It is a telescope, a microscope, if you please. The eye's spot is not behind my glasses, but from within the brain; and a blow on the back of the head will produce blindness quite as certainly as a blow in the face. The instrument can be disfigured, and yet the visions it has seen remain! Let me with one single example show you what I mean. There was a beautiful story told of Helen Keller, and I sent to Helen Keller to know whether it were true. You know that Miss Keller, who is now a student in Radcliffe College, Harvard University, was, at the beginning, blind and dumb and deaf, absolutely. The painful, careful training by Miss Sullivan and those associated with her has made that young girl capable of taking her Latin and Greek examinations for entrance into Radcliffe College, and has widened her information beyond that of most girls of her age. This is the story: They were very careful that she should never have any religion taught her, because they wanted to see whether there is an experience that does not depend upon sight or hearing

or speech, the ordinary avenues through which religion comes, — the reading of religious books, the hearing of argument, and talking with people of religious tendencies. That was shut away from her by intention. It is said that Phillips Brooks was brought finally to visit Helen Keller and to talk with her about the Fatherhood of God. And he spoke of God, our Father, as only he could speak, in terms so natural that God was brought near; in terms so tender that she was not afraid; in terms so real that it seemed a companionable thought; and when he stopped, she turned her sightless eyes to him and said, in the language she had learned by painful effort through the years, "Dr. Brooks, I have always known Him, but I did not know His name." Will my agnostic friend insist that there is not a field of experience that is within the horizons of the mind, helped only a little by the slightest contact, such as this girl had, with the external world?

One other suggestion. I insist that the agnostic must understand one thing most clearly, and it is this: the laws of the mind are as much laws of nature as the laws of matter. Indeed, I would be willing to say that they are more the laws of nature than the laws of

matter. There is not a man so scientific, or so wise in his own conceit, that he would be able to demonstrate to anyone else whether spirit is a sublimation of matter, or matter is a precipitate of spirit. You do not know; and you do not know, because there is not a man in the world who knows. Some people guess, but this is not a subject for conundrums; it is a field for earnest questions. The conundrum is a question the answer to which you have to guess, and in that it differs from the rational question, the answer to which somebody knows. I insist, therefore, that the laws of mind, the terms of consciousness, are the real terms, in which the world is known. Some reader of these pages may ask, "How do you know that there is another life?" I answer you now that I do not know. Then, he will probably say, "And are you a Christian minister?" And I will say, "I am a minister of a Christian Church, and I hope I am a Christian minister, but I would rather the congregation would testify to that." The fact is, the experientialist is right in that regard. It was that to which Huxley addressed himself. You cannot know that which you have not experienced, and another world, another life, is a thing that you cannot experi-

ence while you are occupied with this world and this life. If you ask me if I can make an argument for immortality, I will say with perfect frankness, "Yes, I think I can make an argument, the probabilities of which are all on the side of remaining for ever a personality in God's world." I think I can make an argument for that. This is not the time for it. But if you were dying, and you were to call me to your bedside and ask me whether I could guarantee you by proofs known to me that you should go out of what you call life into life for ever,—in spite of the desire in my mind to help you,—I must still say, I do not *know*. On that subject agnosticism is perfectly justifiable, because it is outside the plane of experience. Now I believe I shall live for ever; and I can argue that question down to the ground. You ask me if I know; and the agnostic attitude is, I do not know, because it is not within the horizon of my experience. The first reason for this is, that testimony is not evidence in this sense; and all the religious books of the world might be piled one upon the other to say that men believed in the eternal life, in "the other life," as they are in the habit of calling it,—and yet, when you are through, you simply have

accumulated testimony of extremely good people, who thoroughly believed, and lived in the terms of their belief, that they should never pass out of existence; but it would not be evidence. What they *know* is the life that now is — they have the power to live in such sublime terms as to *feel* the promise of "the life to come."

The second reason is this: the only way to find out about dying is to die, and nature seems to have arranged it so that after you have done that you cannot tell what the experience is. There may be among my readers people who believe profoundly in spirit communication, and I expect to hear from them on this subject. I want to say to them now, that I do not deny that perfectly plausible reports may have come to perfectly credulous people from "the other world," as they call it. I am prepared to say that; but what I contend is, that *you cannot know it as coming from the other world.* Why? Because you can only know it in terms of your own consciousness, and the moment you know it in terms of your present consciousness, you have to take the "other-world" tag off and put this world's tag on. That is the difficulty. The moment I know

it, I know it in terms of my present experience, therefore it is not from the "*other world*" *to me.*

The further reason touches the people that get these marvellous communications—which I do not deny; I am agnostic with regard to them; I do not know them, I have never had them. The only attempts made upon my credulity in that direction were so ridiculous and so inconclusive that when the participants in the Sceance were through I asked them if I might have my inning, and they said I might. I said if they did n't mind, I would lead them in prayer, and I had a service of religion with those people. It seemed to be a shock to them, but it was a practical way. I thought that you might speak to the Cause of being with such confidence that all other questions were insignificant in comparison. We must also remember the human mind is much less explored up to date than the continent of Africa. That is, we know more about the continent of Africa than about the human mind. When you get certain psychic results that are reported to you as having come from some "other world" you are not sure when you have heard it that it is not a report from some interior province

of the human mind, from which some wanderer of consciousness has come in to report his tribe and the conditions of their life as from an unexplored continent and an unknown tract of the world. That is the difficulty about the whole question; and for that reason I insist that the plane of experience must be narrowed in that particular. You ask me—to be very personal—if I hold this view, that no man may *know* with respect to the future life, why it is that I hold firmly to my own belief that I shall never die,—I mean in the sense of being snuffed out like a candle. I do not expect to be snuffed out like candle, never to be relighted. Why am I not an agnostic with regard to that in the plane of my own belief? For this simple reason. What I know is that I am alive. Every sense registers it. Think of it! The sensory nerves, coming in contact with some external object, telegraph the central office in the brain, and the message goes back over the motor nerves, and an act follows. That goes on all the time. It only goes on, so far as we know, in living men and women. I know I am alive. It rests upon you to prove, if you deny that I shall live for ever, that I shall ever die. The consciousness of life is the present fact, and

I hold this relation to the life of God as securing it in the life of God; and I hold more than that,—that the experience of life and the experience of the love of the Eternal and the sense of the Fatherhood of God, the sense of relationship between the child and God his Father, is so real that I cannot die unless God dies. I cannot understand how the Sum of Life can cut me off as dead.

The best things in life are the things you do not know in the sense that the agnostic says they cannot be known. For instance in your own home you have a little child. When you come home from work, she climbs up upon your knee and you wonder whether she ought to; you are dusty from the day's work, and you wonder what the mother will say if there is a speck on her best clothes; but she climbs up just as if she were not afraid of dirt, and puts her arms around your neck and looking into your eyes,—tired eyes, tired with the moving panorama of the world, tired with straining all the acquisitive power of life to get enough to keep her living and get her educated and place her in life—she says, "Do you love me?" And you say, "Why, yes." You do not have to argue that;

you know it! You do not have to calculate and see whether you really love her. You can shut your eyes and love her. All the senses might have gone into oblivion for a moment, but you would love her. So you say "Yes." And she says, "So do I." And neither of you knows why. You could not tell anybody that asked you why. If you say that you love the child as the tigress loves her cub, as the eagle loves its young, I say to you that between the way in which a tigress in the cage will turn her cub over and lick it and paw it about and mumble it with every sign of motherly affection for it, —the difference between that and what the woman does who nurses the child, and would die for it, separates these two by celestial diameters. They are not the same thing at all. The instinct of motherhood in the beast, and the instinct of spiritual affection in the woman, are as separate as two things can be. All the best things in life are the things we cannot prove, but they are things that dwell in the very consciousness and constitute the experience of sensitive souls.

CHAPTER III

THE BELIEVER

WE come first of all to the importance of the subject itself. I hold, and have maintained throughout these pages, that religion is a natural function of the human soul; that it belongs to human nature; that the man who has religion in excess is as ill-balanced as the man who has it deficiently. There is no reason why we should call a dwarf in religion a man, or why we should call a freak in religion a man; because religion belongs in human nature in its place, proportioned to the other faculties of the human mind. It is not the sole business of man, but it is his business, nevertheless. The importance of the subject arises not only from the fact that religion is a natural function of the human creature,—that his soul is adjusted to the uses of its spiritual functions just as the eye to light, the ear to sound, and the lungs to atmosphere,—not only is this so, but the beleiver represents the only

operative class in the world of mind, namely the optimist. I believe there is a moral use in optimism that the pessimist never can reach; that there is a moral function for the optimist which the cynic wholly ignores; that the optimist, the man who believes not that things are at their best, but that things are coming to their best, is the man who must of necessity be classed with the believers, as the pessimist must be classed with the deniers. I understand perfectly well—every man of experience must understand—that there is a nether side to life, that it is not all shining and brilliant, that it is not all fair and attractive. The man who says there is no nether side of life, no tragedy that is played without any interval between the acts, no pathos that wrings the heart and drives men to despair,—the man who says there is no nether side of life, is not an optimist, he is an idiot. He does not understand that there is a side of the embroidery, however beautiful the pattern may be on its upper side, that when it is reversed seems disaster and contradiction, and the stitches all awry; and yet the optimist and the believer belong to the same class; they belong to the class that has in charge the moral triumph of the world.

Let us consider certain distinctions between the believer as the representative of faith, and what have been mistaken for aspects of his vocation. "Faith" is a much misunderstood word. It is supposed to be the prerogative of people who "get religion." I want to say here with great distinctness that you cannot "get religion;" you cannot get rid of it. It is in the fibre of your nature. It is part of your tissue. It is woven, interwoven, and complexly involved with the whole structure of the human mind. People get up in the morning and say, "Go to, now, I am going to get religion to-day." They are only going to change the costume of their thinking and their attitude of mind. When evening falls they will not have got any new thing whatever, except a new attitude toward some fancy of their own. So the word "faith," as thought to belong to the religious world alone, is misunderstood. I have said religion is a function of the human soul. Faith is the exercise of that function. There is a passage in the New Testament which declares that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." There is a better definition of faith given by a modern man, more easily understood, more strikingly stated, it seems to me, less invested with

mysticism, more practical to the common mind. He declares that "Faith is the conviction that in the universe there is something that corresponds to my best." That is the attitude of faith. "In the universe there is something that corresponds to my best." When I am at my best, the universe and I are in intimate correspondence.

Let me give you an illustration of the uses of faith in other aspects than religious. Take the man who believes in himself. We all have to be on good terms with ourselves if we are to live comfortably in the world and do any good work. The man who hates himself has sapped the energy of his purpose in life. The discouraged man has to get over his discouragement before he does any good work. Self-respect is of the very essence of moral character. The man who believes in himself is an example of faith as a natural function. He believes he is a man of destiny, that he is a man of power, of opportunity, that he has faculties which he must seriously consider and constantly use. When his faith in himself is excessive, he is known as an egotist,—that is, he travels with the sign of the perpendicular pronoun all the time, and "I, I, I," stands as a kind of exclamation point of all the

performance of his life. A most unpleasant man! But he simply has faith in himself in excess, which is as genuine a faith as a man ever felt in moments of worship. He is his own idol, and worships at his own shrine.

Take the man who believes profoundly in his fellows. He believes in the "essential dignity of human nature," as Dr. Channing would phrase it. He believes in the "sovereignity of the human mind" as George William Curtis would have said. He believes in the capacity of human nature for all good. He does not believe in man "as ruined, but as incomplete," and that he rises by continual ascent in a way that discounts and contradicts the old doctrine of the "fall of man." Man never fell. He has been rising since the beginning. This man believes in his fellows. They are his fellows; they are not strangers to him, not alien. He lives the line in Terence's play which electrified and astonished the Roman audience that first heard it,—"I am a man, and nothing that is human is foreign to me." This man believes in his fellows. We call him a lover of his kind, a philanthropist; and he loves them so much that he is not particular that they shall be just his kind. He will allow them to be a variation from his

kind, and love them still. He is an example of the exercise of faith in an object that is worthy of its bestowal.

Carry now the exercise of faith to its limit as applied to the Infinite and Eternal. The believer, the man of faith, who has come into correspondence with the Ultimate Reality in the universe, who may call that Ultimate Reality by a name that is in no liturgy nor in any scripture, but who has projected his life upon the confidence that God is, by whatever name he may be known,—that man is exercising the same faculty exactly as the man who believed in himself and the man who believed in his fellows; but he is believing profoundly in that Ultimate Reality which in moments of divine communion he calls the Great Companion, and in moments of revery seems to him the very palpitating heart of the universe itself. He is a believer in God. Now if you dispute the term, I am not particular about it. To one who asked me if I was not playing fast and loose with that term, I gave the answer which I repeat now. I care nothing for the term. In all the world, no human being, from the most developed saint of any creed or kind or religion, down to the creature who bowing down before stock or stone worships

there, was ever left unheard by the Being who made him. If the saint has his idea of God, and the savage his symbol,—the totem-stick, or whatever it may be,—that is simply a question not of religion but of development. The mystic, to whom God has no form nor name, simply represents the other antithesis, the extreme, the ultimate pole from this undeveloped savage with his stone image or his totem-stick. He only represents religion in another aspect of its development. The name is never the Reality. It is for faith in that which is above all names I plead.

Let us come to certain other distinctions. Faith is not synonymous with credulity. Credulity is simply the open mouth of the sewer, with the lay of the land in that direction; so that you only need a freshet to fill the drain. It may be clean water that runs in. It may be the very distilled snows of heaven. But still the open mouth receives it, unquestioning, and the transit of it from the conduit is unimpeded. That is the attitude of credulity, which accepts whatever it is asked to accept. It has an unfailing appetite and an unappeased curiosity, and the sceptic is as likely to be credulous as any other man in the world. I will give you an illustration of the kind of thing that happens.

A woman said to me years ago: "I think it is about time my daughters were learning something about the Christian religion." I said I thought it would be a good plan. She proposed to send them to a class I was holding, and said: "My daughters are so ignorant of the Christian religion that they asked me a question the other day that surprised me. They know all about other religions." I congratulated her, but I wanted to say that there were people, like Max Müller, who had studied all the Sacred Books of the East and would not claim that. She said: "My daughters asked me this question—'Mother, who lived first, Moses or Jesus?'" "Well," I replied, "that was rather an astonishing question for grown-up people to ask." Just to try her as to this credulous attitude,—she was an excellent woman, full of all good works, and not full of good knowledge,—I added to her: "I would not have been surprised if your daughters had wondered who lived first, Jesus or Mohammed." "Oh," she said, "they could not have made that mistake. If there had been no Mohammed there could not have been any Christ." She was only six hundred years out of the way on the wrong side of the Christian Era. That is the credulous attitude of mind

that believes the new thing proposed the real thing, because it is so new it has not lost the tag off it yet. That is not faith. That person is not a believer. He is simply a man with a morbid appetite for receiving things without examination, without test. This man is not a believer, he is a mere receiver, whether his credulity be pseudo-scientific, the credulity of the man who reads the newspaper, or the credulity of a corrupt official, for instance, who believes all the things he wants to believe, or whether it be the credulity of the religious man, the man whose mind has been filled up with everything that comes to hand. The tip-cart of the world's knowledge has just been backed up to his mind and dumped in. He is not a man of faith. He is a man of varied and unassorted beliefs, and is not, therefore, in the best sense, a believer. That distinction must be made between faith and credulity.

A distinction must also be made between faith and speculation. There is a speculative quality in the mind for which I have contended in these pages. The sceptic, as the inquirer, must have all things subject to him by way of stimulus to the desire to know. But the speculative plane of thought is not the plane of the religious life. It is wholly different. Re-

ligion is met upon the plane of the practical reason and not upon the plane of the speculative intellect. The passage has to be made in theology from the plane of the speculative intellect to the plane of the practical reason, or you would never get applied Christianity or applied anything else in the name of religion. The trouble with the theological world has always been that it has been content to speculate with infinite variety upon an infinite number of subjects, about most of which no human being can know anything at all. The exercise has been immensely entertaining, but it has not built up the religious life. It has strengthened the mind of the speculative reasoner because it has given what any mental exercise will give, increased power of concentration and ability to handle his own thought. But always before he was through, he had to make the descent from the plane of speculative reasoning to the plane of practical reasoning.

A distinction must be made also between the believer and the nominally religious man. There is a great contempt abroad for the "professor of religion." It is partly justified, and partly unjust. I have the good fortune to belong to a church that does not put any premium upon a man's making a profession

of religion. It puts a vast deal more emphasis upon the character of the man, and the question of his alliance with a church of any form of faith that he is satisfied to assume is left entirely to his own private judgment. Still, I believe in the Church, or I would not be a minister of religion in charge of a church; but I believe in the Church as an assemblage of people given over to an earnest devotion to the will of God, not an assemblage of people whom you can designate by the badge they wear or the phrase they use. In the Egyptian Book of the Dead, among the splendid passages that are written concerning the soul as it goes up to be weighed and passed on into the Courts of the Blessed,—in that ancient document, antedating by at least twenty-five hundred years probably by four thousand years, the era we call Christian,—this significant thing is added to all the other virtues: "he hath the right tone." It does not mean what we mean by a "high-toned" man, a man of right character. It means that he could say the holy things in the holy way. It means what old Betty Higden meant, in one of Dickens's stories, when she cuffs her son for reading the newspaper in a sing-song, and says: "How dare ye read the paper in the

Bible twang!" The Egyptian Book of the Dead means the man who can say the holy things in the holy way. That has gone out of use except in rare and isolated instances. There is only one tone for character and for religion together. So that the distinction must be made between the "professor of religion" and the man of faith. Many a man of supreme faith has never been a professor of religion in the nominal and usual sense of that word. The deep, profound, earnest convictions of life are not easily adjusted to the usual demands of the church as to its membership or the articles of a creed. The professor of religion is not, therefore, in this statement, to be confused with the believer. He may belong under both designations, but, because he is despised by you, for instance, as a member of a church, he should not, therefore, be dismissed without investigation as to whether he is really a believer or not; and for this reason I come now to the major thing I desire to say to you.

Religion, I have said, is a natural function of the human creature. It belongs to man. By virtue of it all art in its appeal to the æsthetic nature has its share in religion. It is safe to say that without it three things

would never have been for your edification,—the great works of sculpture and painting in the graphic arts; the great works of architecture, where religion was enshrined, sometimes buried; and the third thing that would not have been left to you is the work of the musical world, most of which we should not have had but for the contribution of religion to it; and still a fourth thing—your boys would have no Latin and Greek classics to study in the schools if it had not happened that when Cassiodorus was secretary to the Eastern Emperor in the sixth century, he found on his hands a lot of monks, whom he set to work copying the Latin and Greek classics, thus preserved to this age. So, even in the schools themselves there is this service done by religion as a servitor of man, creating and preserving art and literature in an age when the learned and servants of art were to be found only in the churches of Europe.

The main reason for declaring for the believer as the exponent of religion is that the believer represents a quality in the mind rather than expression on the tongue. I am very anxious to have you understand that religion is not only natural, but is easiest handled and

most potent when reduced to its simplest terms. Religion, faith as its expression, and the believer as its exponent, represent a quality of mind based in reverence. Is it not true that there is a grave danger that the quality of reverence shall disappear from the younger life of our time? Things pass so readily before the mind, so easily command the attention, the world is so interesting, so various, so multiform, its industries are so many, its pressure is so great, that the meditative quality, the brooding faculty, the power to take a thing and hold the mind over it until it incubates the egg of thought, until it brings the singing thing out of the egg that was in the nest of the moment,—that quality declines ever more and more in this time in which we live, in this land in which we live. The German child, the English child is more deferential than the American child. The American child has been a little nineteenth-century philosopher. The twentieth century is now on his hands, and he knows not what to do with it. He is deferred to, he is coddled, and cared for; he has more playthings than he can play with; he grows tired of the things heaped upon him. He lives in the rattle and bang of a great city perhaps, and grooves are made in his brain by

the mere impact of noise, until I have known children of the poorer East Side homes to whom the most dreadful thing in the world was silence; they could not endure to be silent. It is the growing shame of every great city, the intolerable burden of men and women of the poorer class of the great city, that they never have the privilege of being alone; which the human mind needs. The human mind needs to be alone with itself. It needs to be quiet and to brood and fashion its own life out of "reverence for the things that are above," as Goethe has said, "for the things that are around, and for the things below." That is an essential quality of the well-ordered mind. The things above provoke it to worship; the things around produce in it the sense of fellowship; reverence for the things below inspires it to the great compassions of life. Reverence is an essential quality of the well-ordered and normal mind, and the believer is dealing with the reverential quality in the mind. Your children are sometimes a surprise to you by what they say. You think them irreverent. No; it is the wonder-element in them, born of their very reverence. They live in a world of mythology, of fancy, of fairy stories. They say things about the Eternal

that seem very comical and sometimes irreverent. But it is their very reverence that leads them to say these things,—that is, if they have been brought up under conditions of reverence in the household. That same wonder-element in the childhood of the race produced the miracle, produced the prophet, and religion for many and many a generation was supported upon the two great pillars of prophecy and of miracle. Take any of the old books about religion. You will find the argument for revealed religion to be that prophets prophesied what came to pass, and miracles were performed to prove that the prophecy was true. That is short and easy; but it is not true. In the first place, most of the prophets were not prophesying; they were talking about something in their minds and hearts; for their own time they were the statesmen of Israel, dealing with great state questions. For instance, the Book of Daniel, which has been regarded as a great prophecy, was not a prophecy. It was written about 160 B. C., and was a war document intended to inflame the patriotism of the Jews. The time came, however, when this structure of the temple of religion, standing upon its two pillars of miracle and prophecy, built out of the wonder-element in the

primitive mind, was entered, as the blind Samson entered the temple of Dagon, by the giant we know as Common-sense, ordinary reason, natural penetration; as Samson came into the temple of the Philistines, and, led by his guide, the blind giant flung his arms about the two pillars on which the great temple was supported, bowed himself between them, and pulled the building down upon his enemies, so Common-sense entered into the temple of Religion, supported upon its pillars of miracle and prophecy, and bowed himself between them, and they fell, and the literary world of criticism took up their fragments to examine them; *but the temple stood!* The temple stood! Why? Because it did not really rest on miracle and prophecy. It rested upon the profoundest convictions of the human soul and the ultimate reality of the universe; and the theologians had come in and built up other supports in contradiction of the well-known architectural rule that you shall not put a support that does not sustain any weight. They built up these supports under the structure, and able scholars in divinity schools and in churches taught that miracle and prophecy were the props of the Christian system. But the temple of religion was

older than these artificial supports; it was founded on human nature and buttressed in the needs of men.

Still further, the believer represents not only an attitude of mind based on reverence, he represents a quality of life.

I like those phrases, the "low-grade" man, and the "high-toned" man. I was speaking on a platform one night, and a 'cello, strung just as the musician had set it down, was standing behind me, and as I spoke I could hear it answer. Every tone of my voice was taken up by the tense strings of the musical instrument, which repeated behind me the thing I was saying to the audience. So is the high-toned man, strung to the tension of his greatest power; he makes the music of the world by the virtues which he discourses to the world in which he is placed. He is high-strung, he is "high-toned." On the other hand, there is the man that is put together so loosely that I should suppose, when he was made he was made just out of ordinary tow, and they forgot to put in any twist. You have seen such a man. He will not bear a pound's strain. He frays out, pulls apart. He is just oakum that has ceased to be rope and can be used only as filling. As the

calker, with this frayed-out, tarred rope that has been brought into this fluffy condition, calks up the seams in the old ships hauled up for repair. That is the kind of man that cannot be religious; he cannot be a believer until he gets over the condition of slackness of soul, of the loose quality of his mind. For religion is not something to be left, as men so superciliously say, to women and children. If the women had not cared for it it would not have lasted for men. It would not have been in the world to-day but for the essentially religious quality in women. It was a right instinct in the Catholic Church that put in her place the mother of Christ as the representative of religion in an age when human nature was so meanly thought of that only a miraculous birth and a pure virgin could be the representatives of religion. No; the time has gone by when we can leave religion to women and children. It takes a good deal of a man to be a believer, because of the quality of life that it involves. The reason that so few people are genuine believers is that the strain is so great—not upon credulity, but upon integrity.

This brings me to a point to which I want your attention with all the fixedness that you

can command. A man who is a genuine believer has as a fundamental postulate in his thinking, the belief that this world is essentially moral. He believes in the essential integrity of the universe. The other type of man believes that there is a "short cut across-lots." He thinks there is some indirect way by which he can achieve his ends. Whereas, if he is a business man he knows if that were true the business of the world would not last five years. The business world is built up, with all its defects, with all its want of commercial integrity, as we sometimes see it,—it is built up upon the abiding conviction that morality is an essential part of human life. Yesterday the business world did ninety-five per cent. of its work upon credit. If you were, because you disbelieved in common integrity, to call back, during this new century upon which we have entered, the whole business of the world to a cash basis, you would destroy the commerce of this country before the year was out. No; it is because human nature is essentially dependable; because the universe is essentially moral; because the vast majority of people are really honest, that the great mass of business in the world every day of the world's life is done upon a system of credit.

The common belief in the integrity of man must be carried through and applied to the universe at large. The universe is man's home. If man himself is essentially honest, as I believe he is; if he is essentially right, as I believe he is, the universe must be of the same kind. His environment and himself must come together on even terms. I believe that the only solution of life is on the basis that the universe from core to rim, from centre to circumference, is moral through and through. In your school life you learned this axiom: "A straight line is the shortest distance between two points." It is just as true in morals. You learned that "The whole cannot be greater than the sum of all its parts." It is just the same in morals. You learned that "Two things equal to the same thing are equal to each other." These mathematical axioms that are the very substance and foundation of the science of geometry are also axiomatic in the moral world. Directness of intention, sincerity that is crystalline and clear — these are qualities a man must have in a universe he believes to be moral. He can so be a believer; and not on any other terms whatever.

I want to call your attention, finally, to certain conditions under which the believer lives.

The first is a sense of proportion. I belong to a class of people — ministers of religion — who I suppose show the gravest defect in this particular of any class in the world. The ministry of religion has been said to be conscientiously and consistently disproportionate in its thinking. For instance, it has emphasised the other world and not this. It has emphasised the spiritual and not the natural; revelation and not Nature; miracle and not common force; prophecy, and not plain sense; prayer and not work. It has emphasised death and not life, and feels that its churches are more to be maintained than the truth. Let the ministry work out its own salvation. Sometimes it will be saved because it is really true. Sometimes it will have to take refuge, probably, in the general amnesty that is given to unconquerable ignorance. But in the common mind, in the average layman, if he is to be a believer in a world that is worth living in, the sense of proportion must have a prominent place in the ordering of his thinking.

Proportioned thinking, giving to every phase of life and character its due proportion, is accompanied, in the next place, by crystalline sincerity. You cannot believe anything that is worth believing which has to do with character

until you have purged your mind of all cant. Never say the thing that you do not believe. Never think the thing that you cannot summon before the bar of reason and adjudge its place and value. Never use an influence that you do not want used for you. Take no attitude toward the great realities for another mind that you would not assume for yourself. Take no attitude for yourself that you would not be willing to be found in if God should call you that moment to your account. You say these are high qualities. They are not too lofty for a man to claim for himself. A man knows whether he is a clean man or not. A man knows whether he is dealing with things in a shifty way or not. He knows whether he is using words in two senses or only in the sense in which they can be used. He knows whether he is shuffling and shifty in the attitude he has toward life. He has a right to say that he is absolutely and entirely sincere in his own judgment; and he cannot believe anything that is worth believing unless he is. It is not worth while for a man to live who has a debate with himself for ever, who has to arrange all the things he has ever said or thought, before he can say the next thing. That is a farce without being interesting,—the worst kind of a

farce ever put on the boards. The secret of the directness of Jesus of Nazareth was that he had no debate with himself. When they said to him, "Shall we pay tribute to Cæsar or no?" he said, "Show me a coin." And they showed him a denarius. He said, "Whose image and superscription is this?" They said, "Cæsar's." Then he said, "Give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

There was a man in the synagogue who had a withered hand, so the story says, and they watched Jesus whether he would heal him on the Sabbath day. Think of their state of mind, that they watched the Great Benefactor to know if he would be kind to a helpless cripple on the Sabbath day! He, perceiving their thought, said unto the man, "Stand forth." Then turning to that group of people whom he knew, he said, "Is it right to do good or evil on the Sabbath day, to save life or to kill?" And they answered him not a word. That was a straightforward question that could be answered by sincere minds, and they were not up to it. They held their peace. The story goes on to say that the helpless man was told to stretch forth his withered hand. You can see the palsied hand pointing out uncertainly

into that audience which could not answer a straightforward question. And the Master said to him, "Go unto thy home. Thou art healed." That was the way in which he dealt directly with men, because he had no debate with himself. He had not to ask himself whether he thought so and so, before he could say what he thought to other men.

So I leave with you this subject of The Believer, hoping that you belong to the great multitude of those who are profoundly believers in something that is worth while. If you ask me where you shall begin, I say, Begin with these three qualities, two of which I have already named. First, begin by putting the emphasis in life where it belongs, in due proportion. Begin by dealing with yourself in terms of absolute sincerity, and then add to that a passion for righteousness that shall leave you a believer in the essential righteousness of the universe, although you may doubt every proposition that has ever been proposed by the Church of God. A passion for righteousness is the very essence of faith,—a faith that is represented in the Beatitude as "hunger and thirst for righteousness." Fronting the century of promise, and looking back over the century that has been a century of emancipation,

not for the slave only, but for the human mind—standing here and looking out upon the new century, give the weight of your faith to the idea of being faithful; give the emphasis of your mind to the Ultimate Reality that is in the universe, and is the substance and sum of its life; give your love and labour to that, and whenever the time shall come in which you answer the roll-call, saying, "I am here," you shall be able to look into the faces of those that are about you unashamed, because at least one thing in life you believed profoundly and fully, and followed it to the end.

CHAPTER IV

FROM THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT TO THE NICENE CREED

FROM the earliest apprehension of God as actual to the final conclusion that "God is All" the ascent of the mind is immense. It constitutes the history of the soul's life. In the passage from worship as fear to worship in love one marks the development from polytheism to monotheism. The Jews, a people of religious genius, accomplished this passage early, and they maintain its conclusion still. The Semite rises out of polytheism to the conception that God is One. The Aryan rises out of a terrestrial polytheism to a polytheism no less evident though celestial. To the Semite one God is an intellectual certainty and a moral inspiration. To the Aryan many gods are a necessity and a hindrance to ethical unity. The Jew, the finest product of the Semitic stock, raises his hands in prayer and utters his creed: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One."

The supreme flower of the Jewish genius for religion was Jesus of Nazareth. He was a Jew in body, in mind, and in motive; a Jew after the pattern of those sturdy defenders of spirituality in religion, Amos, Micah, Joel, and Isaiah; a Jew appearing in a time of decay of spiritual worship to declare that God is Spirit; a Jew surveying the formalism of his age to declare that "the pure in heart shall see God"; a Jew renewing the ancient hope of God's Kingdom and its Messiah, but declaring: "It cometh not with outward show but is within you"; a Jew suspected of making innovations upon the ancient faith, but answering him who asks for the "greatest of all commandments" in the words he had repeated each day in the worship of the synagogue in his native village, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment." The second is this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Jesus made the sayings of the Jewish fathers the groundwork of his teaching. The Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer may be found substantially in the aspirations of the devout prophets and

psalmists of Israel. Jesus, like the other great prophets of his race, arraigned the narrowness of religious dogma, and tested it by the breadth of religious need. He contradicted only to enlarge. He made innovations only as the pioneer fells a forest to plant a field. That which does not seem Jewish in the words of Jesus was the Jew fulfilled, enlarged, and sublimated.

Christianity, then, was Jewish in origin and essence. That it ceased to be Jewish in expression was the accident of history, not the purpose of its founders. Jesus, Paul, and Simon Peter, with all that noble company accounted the apostles of the religion of Jesus, when they were most emphatic for the universality of religion, spoke as Jews. The words ascribed to the Master phrased the conviction of the disciples, "Salvation is of the Jews." It was well for Paul that he had been a dweller in Tarsus, for he knew what it was to be a Roman born and a Greek by association; but in religion he was so narrow a Jew that he persecuted those who were disciples of the larger Hebrew faith. When the struggle came between the religion of Jesus, the Son of Man, and the religion of the temple of the sons of Israel it was Paul's declaration, "After the

manner which they call heresy, worship I the God of my fathers." The test of orthodoxy is thus declared to be spiritual communion. This is the key-note of Christianity—that it finds its ground of being in God. It is Unitarian in its origin, since it is Jewish and therefore monotheistic; it is a divine impulse from the life of Jesus of Nazareth, the Hebrew, which finds its source in God's unity, its expansion in man's brotherhood, its inspiration in man's relation to God the Father, and its mission in revealing the Father to His children who "ignorantly worship" him. The Greek Aryan, with his "gods many and lords many," was to find in the unity of God the ultimate fact of his philosophy and the justification of his ethics. The conversion of the world to Christ was an effort to reduce the confusion of the Aryan Pantheon to unity of worship in the religion of Jesus, the Semite. The Scriptures of the new faith were Jewish, every line. The teachers of the faith were at first Jewish, every one. The philosophy of life, at once simple and strong, was the conception of a Galilean. Essential Christianity is essentially Jewish; therefore, essential Christianity is Unitarian.

The history of the Unitarian idea, from the

Sermon on the Mount to the Nicene Creed, can be traced here only in outline. We must throughout remember that the absorbing zeal of a true Hebrew gave it birth that the universalism of Paul the Hebrew set it free; that the hope of the coming Messiah held it together and the Unity of God and the Brotherhood of Man afforded it motive for worship and communion. Let us pass in brief review the processes which confused its simplicity, and substituted at length, in the fourth century, a metaphysical speculation for the religion of Jesus, and thus introduced the great Apostasy.

The first break away from Jewish origins which appears (in the Book of Acts) is the appointment of the seven deacons "to serve tables." All the names are Hellenic. We must take account of the classes first affected by the new movement. There were the Jews by birth and religion, who were Palestinian as to residence and Aramaic in language; or Alexandrian as to residence and Greek in language. There were those who were Greeks by birth and Jews in religion,—"proselytes of righteousness." In the third place come those who were Greeks by birth and religion,—converts from paganism to the new

faith. Here is the material for the controversy which appears in the Book of Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistle to the Galatians as a conflict between the believers in Paul's gospel and the Jerusalem-party—those who insisted upon the universality of religion and those who admitted that it might become universal but must be Jewish first. The struggle was maintained until the destruction of the centre of worship at Jerusalem made all authority turn upon ideas, unsupported by appeal to holy places and their associations. But the contention still survived in the Judaic sects, not so much heretical as narrow, "who still sought to particularise and contract Christianity, as Gnosticism enlarged it to vagueness." Several well-defined claims were now put forth, all Jewish in origin. Of the most important, the Messiahship of Jesus, Baur well says:

"Had not the Messianic idea—the idea in which Jewish national hopes had their profoundest expression—fixed itself on the person of Jesus and caused him to be regarded as the Messiah who had come for the redemption of his people, and in whom the promise of the fathers was fulfilled, the belief in him could never have had a power of such far-reaching influence in history. It was in the Messianic idea that the

spiritual contents of Christianity were clothed with the concrete form in which it could enter on the path of historical development. The consciousness of Jesus was thus taken up by the national consciousness and enabled to spread and become the general consciousness of the world."

If it be asked how could such a hope, local and national to the Jew, be transferred to Greek minds, we are reminded of several well-established facts. (1) The great body of Romans and Greeks converted to Judaism in the century preceding our era had given Judaism a singular and significant place in the Roman Empire. It was a religion allowed and set apart, literally assigned the place it claimed; whatever enthusiasm stirred its heart would make its pulsation felt throughout the Roman world. In the first century of our era Alexandria, Rome, and other great metropolitan centres were as Jewish as New York is today. (2) Ethically disquieted, the Roman world looked with hope for a deliverance answering to human need, correlative to the national hope of the Jew, to whom all questions were centred in religion; the humanity of the Greek, which found expression in philosophy and art, in the Jew blossomed into psalm and prophetic writing. "Great hopes

are for great souls." This was a people chosen from above for the purposes of God, because moved from within for the uses of religion according to a genius which was in its inception Jewish, but has been found in its expansion simply human. (3) To any who might inquire what had become of the "Messianic-hope" the answer was always ready, that it had been pushed forward to the "second advent." The chief inspiration of Jew, Hellene, and Roman convert now became an ardent hope for the reappearing of Christ in the clouds of heaven to introduce a millennial reign. Already the wholesome conceptions, of the Jewish king who should rule in righteousness, of the chosen people who should constitute Messiah in a corporate Israel, and of the great Deliverer of those who would live in the Spirit, had taken on world-large proportions and in one of the earliest of the Christian documents find such expression as this:

"Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom unto God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet; the last enemy that shall be abolished is death. And when all things have been subjected unto

him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to Him that did put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 24–28).

In many forms these words of Paul are repeated for three hundred years; they are the Messianic hope of the Jew taking shape as the universal hope of the Church.

In view of this second advent, the *Parousia*, martyrdom became a virtue, marriage an inconvenience, and personal possessions a hindrance. But however the Messianic idea may change, there has been no change in the monotheism of the religion of Jesus. The Jew had never declared that the Messiah would be God. Between Jehovah and Messiah there was all the distance between the Ineffable and Unapproachable and the king of Israel whom He ordained for righteous rule; the Messiah was never to be an object of worship, or in any sense supernatural. Those who fixed their eyes upon the clouds, looking for the second advent, in ascribing a nature not simply human to Christ in no way exalted him to the place of God; the subordination of the Son to the Father survives, as crucial and invariable beneath all efforts to phrase his nature and define his being. However large his figure grows; however insufficient his

earthly parentage appears; however necessary to the imagination his miraculous birth seems to be to account for his power and character; however the pendulum of faith swings from the belief in the reality of his humanity to the belief in that humanity as the mere phantom and apparition in which the Father appears to suffer, no Father of the Church for three hundred years lost sight of the distinction between absolute Deity and its representation in the terms of human life; *always the Son is subject to the Father.* The monotheism survives strongly in all the deliverances concerning the Being of God. The Synod of Antioch rejects and condemns the term ὁμοούσιος (consubstantial) as used by Paul of Samosata to indicate the identity of substance between the Father and the Son; and though, in the next century, the Council of Nicæa returned to it as the test of orthodoxy, it left its testimony to the subordination of Christ to God in the Nicene Creed in the terms, "Very God *out of* very God."

If we turn to the *Shepherd of Hermas* we find such statements as this: "First of all, believe that there is one God, who created and formed all things out of nothing. He comprehends all and is alone not to be

comprehended (limited by definition), who cannot be defined in words, nor conceived by the mind." This is a favourite passage with Irenæus, as we might expect, with Origen in the third century, and in the fourth century with Athanasius, to whom has been ascribed a doctrine of a Trinity of which he never dreamed.

This, then, is clear, through all intricacies of doctrine, that the absolute Being of God remains untouched by the growing claims of Christ. If the cause of this be sought, it is to be found in the unmistakable Jewish enthusiasm for the Eternal which penetrates the expressions looking to subordination of the Son.

To Clement of Rome, "Christ is sent forth from God and the Apostles are from Christ; both came of the Will of God in the appointed order." So in "*the Teaching of the Twelve*," God is "the Almighty Maker," and Jesus "his servant." Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians bears rich testimony to the Scriptures of the Old Testament and quotes the precepts of the New. He proves the resurrection, not by referring Deity to Christ, but by the analogy of the Phœnix, as Herodotus and Pliny tell the tale of its return from death.

Polycarp, to whom we owe, according to

Harnack, "an instance singular in history of a chain of unbroken tradition," is saturated with the New Testament spirit in his letter to the Philippians. It would seem an echo of Paul, when we read Polycarp's blessing of the Church: "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he himself who is an everlasting High Priest, the Son of God, even Jesus Christ, build you up in faith and truth."

In the Gospels and the Epistles, the strong monotheistic tone of all the utterances is to be noted; even in the Apocryphal documents, and especially in the Fathers of the second century, we get the same insistence upon the absolute Being of God. How this was penetrated by the suggestions which later developed into a vague tritheism we will notice later on.

If we turn to the *Teaching of the Twelve* a late-discovered second-century document, or even to the catechetical instruction in the Alexandrian churches, we have the clearest proof that the magnifying of Jesus Christ has in no way obscured the supreme object of worship. I quote from the instructions of the Alexandrian catechumens: "I believe in one true God, the Father Almighty, and in His only Son our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and

in the Holy Spirit who giveth life." At the close of the third century, this doctrine of "subordination" holds its place, though much overlaid by later thought:

"I pledge myself to Christ and I am baptised in the faith of the one Supreme Uncreated God, in Jesus Christ, by whom the universe was created and formed, and from whom all things proceed. I believe in the Lord Jesus, His only Son, the first born of all creation, begotten before the ages by the good pleasure of the Father, not created, by whom all things in heaven and earth were made, visible and invisible. In the last times he descended from heaven and took upon him our flesh. He was born of the Virgin Mary. He lived holily and blamelessly in the world, walking in all the commandments of his God and Father"

The earliest Christian inscription of any length which we have is the epitaph upon the tomb of Abercius, Bishop of Hieropolis, discovered by Mr. Ramsay in 1882. It is significant as a survival of the faith of the second century near its close:

"I, the citizen of a chosen city, made this in my lifetime, that in due season I may have a resting place for my body. Abercius by name, I am a disciple of the pure shepherd who feeds his herds of sheep on the mountains and plains, who has great eyes that look on all sides; for he taught me faithful writings, who sent me to royal Rome to see it, and to see a golden-robed, golden-sandalled Queen, and there, too, I saw a people that

has the bright seal. And I saw the plain of Syria and all the cities, even Nisbis, crossing the Euphrates, and everywhere I had companions. With Paul I followed and Faith led me everywhere, and everywhere served up to me for food a fish [the cryptogram for Christ] from the fountain, very large, pure, which a pure Virgin grasped, and she [Faith] gave this to friends to eat continually, having excellent wine, giving the mixed wine with bread. These words, standing by, I, Abercius, bade to be thus inscribed. I was truly living my seventy-second year. Let every fellow-Christian who reads this pray for me."

This is not simply curious, coming so late in the nineteenth century from the close of the second century, but it is instructive also as showing how simple were the phrases in which Christ, the Church, baptism, and the Lord's Supper were conveyed. It is the undogmatic age to which belong the last of the Apostolic Fathers and the Confessors. It is the century of Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and Irenæus. It is not yet conscious that the Good Shepherd has "two natures" or is God, or that the simple Christian meal is a mystic sacrifice. The doxology of Flavian of Antioch had not yet been heard in any church. Men did not yet "shout forth Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit." This, according to Philostorgius, was new to the Church, which

before that time had used the form, "Glory be to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Though some also said, 'Glory be to the Father in the Son and in the Holy Spirit.'" The Church was still dependent upon "the heart, which believeth unto righteousness," rather than upon nice distinctions of the speculative intellect.

But already, in the Christian "gnosis" of the second century, a process was at work that was to prepare a soil congenial to the tangled crop of dogma which would cover the third century with its rank growth. The Gnostics, whom the Church repudiated, had infected the Church itself with their methods, though in the school of Philo, and in the Rabbinical science of numbers, a strong tendency had prepared for the change. We find the Old Testament searched for allusions to the growing Christology of the Church. Wherever "Wisdom" is spoken of, it is the Logos doctrine of the New Era appearing in the ancient writings. Wherever it is possible to find a reference to "wood," it prefigures the cross; the "stone" is Christ himself; the pastoral psalms are full of the Good Shepherd, and the sorrows of Messiah are located in Gethsemane and on Calvary. The Eternal Reason, which the Hebrew makes

to dwell always where the Eternal One is, teaches the pre-existence of Christ. To our age many of these constructions are not only false in exegesis and far-fetched in meaning, they are also known to be false readings of the Septuagint Scripture by Greeks ignorant of Hebrew.

The text of an ancient writing begins to claim the first place in the attention of the Fathers of the Church; and those who depend upon the Old Testament, repudiating the pagan writings, match in ingenuity of interpretation those who quote Homer, Plato, and Hesiod, as did Justin, and, later, Origen. The second century is preparing its doctrine of Inspiration, which will grow narrower and narrower, until the fourth century shall declare the sublimest utterances of antiquity "a doctrine of devils" unless they arose in the Hebrew mind.

The strong anti-Jewish temper of the Church in the second and third centuries, which repudiated the Nazarenes, the Ebionites, and all the Judaic survivals of the simple religion of Jesus, was guilty of that strange inconsistency which the Church still perpetuates, of despising the very sources of the Scriptures upon which it hangs in helpless servility. The

Hebrew genius for religion produced for these early centuries the Word of God, and enriched the nations to whom, on their own theory of Revelation, God had never spoken.

The essential and absolute being of God became more and more difficult of apprehension. *An instrument of creation* was demanded by the popular imagination. Already in Egypt the material for this idea was ready to hand; the Greek Cosmogony supplied its share; and the Demiurge of the Gnostics and the Logos of the Orthodox contended for the mastery; often there was but little to choose between the one and the other theory as it was worked out by its partisans. This creative agent is not one and the same at all times; sometimes it is the Son, sometimes Wisdom, sometimes the Holy Spirit. So late as the time of Gregory Nazianzen, A.D. 390, we find diversity of view concerning the Holy Spirit. He says: "Some of our theologians regard the Spirit as a mode of the Divine operation; others as a creation of God; others as God Himself; others again say they know not which of these opinions to accept, from their reverence for Holy Scripture, which says nothing about it."

These later speculations did not belong to

the Apostolic Fathers. The Apostolic Age set itself just two problems and no more: it was intent upon purifying society; and it was intent, as a means to this end, on proclaiming the Supreme God as the object of worship, revealed in his servant Jesus so clearly as to make him seem the Son of God, "only begotten." Vice and polytheism found their antagonists in a faith which proclaimed, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord the Eternal, the Eternal is One," and then summoned to that purity of heart which was to be the preparation to see God. This, and no more, was the essential message of Jesus Christ to the age called apostolic, as they understood it; the adjustment of human relations upon the terms of a Love which in God is Fatherhood, and in man is brotherhood. It was not an age of dogma. They were to "do God's will" as a means of knowing any teaching to be authoritative. There was no consensus of opinion. There was the freest and most inexact recital of the incidents of the life of their Master. They were not yet so far separated from their Jewish beginnings as to excite recognition as a new religious cult. The Christian guild, as a Jewish organisation, was tolerated long after Greek and Roman guilds had been prohibited.

When we pass to the Martyr Age we find that we have not yet reached the age of dogma. Still it is believed that the sanctity of high courage and consistent purpose takes precedence of the "form of sound words." The martyrs did not die to vindicate a body of doctrine; they were sacrificed sometimes at the instigation of personal hatred and private spite, sometimes through suspicion of their secret assemblies, which in the case of the Roman and Greek guilds had been forbidden by law. Sometimes the enthusiasm for death made them rush upon martyrdom, goading to violence a government unwilling to sacrifice its subjects. Sometimes the necessity of providing actors in the gladiatorial shows and cruel sports of the amphitheatre made a levy upon the "suspects" a convenient resource. Sometimes the government referred to these proscribed ones the pestilence or famine for which a superstitious age could not account by natural causes. Some are surprised that the best emperors were the keenest persecutors; but the Roman idea of the State made it inseparable from religion; disloyalty was atheism, and the feeling as to any independent organisation within the State is reflected in the saying of Marcus Aurelius: "What is

not useful to the swarm is not useful to the bee!"

From whatever motive, when Carthage, Smyrna, Antioch, Rome, or the churches of Gaul furnished "confessors" to death, none of them died who were willing to curse Christ or sacrifice to the image of the Emperor. Such a sacrifice was never interpreted as a disbelief in the ultimate Deity to whom Christian and Roman referred religion in its last analysis. There was no examination in the terms of theology which a later age vainly sought to identify with Christian faith. The martyrs of the second century would have died as readily upon the demand to believe in a Trinity as they would upon the demand to believe in the Pantheon of Roman divinities. The Emperor was to them a man to be argued with, as the Apologies of Justin, Tatian, and Origen show; worship of him was forbidden by their belief in the Eternal One and their adoration of the purity of His Son, Jesus Christ. This age of the martyrs speaks in the words of Ignatius of Antioch, 115 A.D.; he beseeches his friends at Rome not to interfere, by petitions for his release:

"I am fearful of your love lest it injure me. For you it is easy to do whatsoever you please, but for me it is

difficult that I should attain God if indeed you do not spare me. For I shall not have such an opportunity to attain God ; nor will ye, if ye now be silent, ever have the benefit of a better work. If ye keep silence about me I shall become God's speech, but if ye love my body I shall be again an echo of myself. It is well that I set from the world to God, that I may rise with Him. I am God's wheat, and by the teeth of the beasts am I ground, that I may become God's pure bread."

The passage from the fathers of the faith to the Fathers of theology is made by Justin Martyr (A.D. 163), naturally, for he was a student of philosophy, and a Greek, though born in Samaria. Henceforward religion will express itself in the terms of philosophy, borrowed from Greek, Roman, and Oriental sources. Even its martyrs will make their Confession in philosophical terms; and emperors will eventually cast in their lot with one party or the other in the debate of the schools. The strenuous faith of early Christianity will soon be overcome by the strident declamation of controversy.

The very protests of the so-called heretics are as instructive as the trend of authority against which the protests were made. Marcion (A.D. 130–180) leads a revolt from philosophy in favor of a religion of the New Testament. He is so persuaded of the benignity of the

Father as Jesus taught of Him, that he cannot identify Him with the Jehovah of the Old Testament. Jehovah may be a God for the Jews, but he is not the Father of Jesus. The Jew's God was, perhaps, a just God, but the God of Jesus was love. The passage to dualism is easy. The supposition of subordinate gods to account for evil is natural. The charge of Gnosticism was early made against Marcion; Marcion and Basilides were certainly the best of the Gnostics. The cardinal points of Marcion's system are these: (1) The Supreme God, who is absolutely good, cannot possibly enter into any union with matter; the material world cannot, therefore, have been created by God, but it is the work of an inferior being, who is ever in conflict with matter but cannot overcome it. (2) The Supreme God has once, and once only, revealed Himself, in Christ; Christ and Christ's religion are therefore, for man, the only possible manifestation of the absolute good. (3) Absolute goodness consists in love and love only. Justice, or the retributive principle, is in its nature opposed to love, and therefore cannot be affirmed of the Supreme God.

Marcion's disciple, Hermogenes, attempted a solution no more logical but more poetic:

the Eternal One attracts out of chaos order and life as by a creative attraction analogous to that of beauty upon the mind of man, or, as Aristotle says, "He influences it as the beloved object influences the lover." Creation is progressive from eternity; matter eternally opposes, and is eternally attracted into, form and life; moral evil occurs when this attraction is successfully resisted. Irenæus and Tertullian opposed to this the orthodox notion that God created all things out of nothing; this may still be good doctrine for the unscientific, but it has been repudiated by all students of cosmogony.

The essential heresy of Marcion, Basilides, Valentinus, and all the Gnostics lay in their denial of the Unity of God. They were not arrayed against the claims of the Trinity, for such a doctrine had not been even remotely foreshadowed in their days. The eternity of matter, the creation of the world by inferior powers, and the two-God theory horrified Irenæus as later they did Origen and Tertullian; the letter of Irenæus to his old fellow-pupil Florinus, who had embraced the teachings of Valentinus, is an effort to reclaim him to a belief in the Unity of God. The opponents of Gnosticism felt a greater solicitude because

they foresaw that, despite the noble lives of its first exponents, there would logically attend upon Gnosticism the same degradation which had debased both Stoicism and Epicureanism. Their opposition was justified by the result as shown in the Cainites and other sects, who claimed that the best way to resist the assaults of evil was to yield to its immoralities as of no account to the spirit and unworthy of attention, being only in the flesh. The grossness of life which resulted proved that with the common people the ethical tendency of Gnosticism could be only evil. It is therefore an error to suppose that the enthusiasm of Irenæus, Origen, Hippolytus, and Tertullian was because they were lacking in regard to God's Unity. It was the very reverse of this which gave power to their assault upon Gnosticism.

Still another class of heretical opposition is represented in that vindication of the liberty of prophesying which takes the name of Montanism. Montanus, Prisca, and Maximilla, the founders of a Society of Friends during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, were perhaps incited to a philosophy of salvation, a study of the life of the soul, by the example of the Stoic Emperor, or goaded to it by the growing

licentiousness of a court over which a philosopher reigned, but which a profligate woman and her son Commodus actually ruled. Legalism was strangely united to liberty in the teaching and practice of Montanism. Fasting and asceticism commended the heresy to the fiery soul of Tertullian. He declaimed against its frenzied prophesying until he was himself in an ecstasy of passion in which he passed to adhesion to the sect (A.D. 202) which fulminated from Carthage its anathemas against the license of Rome. The heretic was more orthodox than the Church in behaviour, and, with a strange mingling of doctrinal exactness and personal self-denial, held aloof from the communion of Christianity as breeding a schism, only to form a sect still narrower, which, living through the third century as "Tertullianists," made prophecy ridiculous and asceticism contemptible.

The church in the West, under Tertullian's lead, was governed by a spirit entirely foreign to the liberality of Jesus and Paul in life and teaching. It did not maintain in any just degree the feeling of Justin, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen that God had spoken by other lips than those of Jews. "There is one River of Truth, but many streams fall into it on

this side and that," said Clement. Truth is one, but its aspects are various: "A drachma is one and the same; but if you give it to a ship-captain, it is called a 'fare,' if to a revenue officer it is called a 'tax,' if to a landlord 'rent,' if to a schoolmaster a 'fee,' if to a shopkeeper a 'price.' Still in each case it is the drachma." Clement's generous attitude was like that of Irenæus, whose mission from the churches of Gaul to Victor of Rome pleaded for moderation toward Montanism, since it held strongly the doctrine of the Word, of the Holy Spirit, and the liberty of the soul to know the will of God. Clement declared that "the cure for error is more knowledge." Such was not the attitude of Tertullian and Tatian; these masters of abuse were most orthodox in declaring all philosophy "a doctrine of devils." Their motto was, "Only believe," a motto enforced by a picturesque blasphemy against human error, which left nothing to be supplied by a later age in its trials for heresy.

Tertullian, indeed, speculated upon the original righteousness of man, fulfilled in the ideal humanity of Christ; but his fine phrase, "Man first, then God," was so twisted by his bias against his opponents that he never rises to an "enthusiasm of humanity." He was

tenacious of a Trinity, and for this reason he crept back into the Roman calendar of saints with all his sins of unholy speech and vicious temper full upon him; but his Trinity was neither logical according to later standards, nor scriptural according to earlier standards. He wrote and spoke with unremitting vehemence. His "testimony of the soul" makes the claim for Christianity that it is grounded in the nature of man and meets his deepest needs. But he is more interested in things against which his own soul may testify,—"against the Greeks," "against the Jews," "against Hermogenes," who claimed that matter was eternal, "against the Gnostic Valentinus," "against all heretics," denying them any claim to tolerance, "against Marcion," "against Praxeas," who seemed to imply that God suffered in the flesh of Christ and whom he taunted with "crucifying the Father." There was much, besides, on which Tertullian had an opinion: he wrote on baptism, on the flesh of Christ, on the resurrection of the body, on penance, prayer, and patience. He wrote an address to the martyrs; he unreservedly condemned the shows of the theatre; he fixed the place of idolatry in the calendar of hate. He was wise about the dress of women. He gave

final judgment as to veils or no veils for unmarried women. He opposed second marriage, and rather deprecated any marriage at all. His asceticism gave weight to fasting; he argued the right and wrong of military service; he defended a Christian soldier who refused to wear a wreath in one of the festivals of Severus; he discussed the question whether in persecution one might avoid his doom by flight. Thus did he know and say much about many things; for most that he said the Church cares but little now, but it turns to his doctrine of the Nature of God and declares him a Father of the Faith *on the only subject upon which he could know absolutely nothing.* He was a man of credulity and yet of spiritual insight; he could say, "We believe, because it is impossible"; but he could also say "The soul divines what is divine." Such a man, with his barbarous African Latin and his Latinised Greek, is vehement for the Trinity, but it is a trinity of his own making; it is neither that of Sabellius, revived in the nineteenth century by Bushnell and borrowed by his later imitators, nor that of Hegel, who is now the consolation of the "Broad Church." Even to Tertullian the subordination of Christ leaves God supreme: "Christ is God's ray, as the rays shine forth

from the sun in the heaven; as I call the ray sun but not the sun ray; so I call the Son God, but not God the Son." He speaks the language of simple religion when he appeals to the soul itself as the witness to Christian faith: "I summon thee, not such as when, formed in the schools, exercised in libraries, nourished in the Academies and Porches of Athens, thou utterest crude wisdom. I address thee as simple and rude, unpolished and unlearned, such as they have thee, who have only thee; the very and entire thing that thou art in the road and in the weaver's factory."

The student of the second and third centuries, following the lead of most modern writers, will come upon a group of names classed in a loose way as "the first Unitarians." We have already claimed as the first Unitarians the Jews, to whom Jesus, himself a Jew, spoke of the Fatherhood of God; the first Unitarian records are the Scriptures of the Old Testament, to the reading of which the chief Church Fathers and champions of Christian doctrine declare their conversion from paganism was due. Such is the testimony of Justin Martyr, Origen, and Athenagoras.

By "the first Unitarians," however, most Trinitarian writers mean quite another matter.

They have forgotten the Jewish origins of Christianity. They have lost sight of the facts that its earliest converts from paganism came through Jewish channels, and that from the Jew Philo and his compatriots in Alexandria Neo-Judaism, Neo-Platonism and Christianity have all drawn their stock theories for the Logos-doctrine, without which it is doubtful if the Christian Church would have lapsed into the Trinitarian belief, or returned to express its theology in terms of a pagan mythology and its faith in the symbols of the same mythology, or to be glad with a sacred joy as it celebrates the old pagan festivals put to new and strange uses.

With serene oblivion of such facts, certain names are pilloried as Unitarians and condemned. They are the group who, without perfect logic, but with a certain instinct for the facts of early Christianity, sought to revive the old doctrine of the Unity of God, unconfused by the newer doctrine of the Logos in its manifold varieties of statement. They are defenders of the primitive faith, not seceders from the orthodox teaching. Who are these men? Many of them are known to us only by name. Some who early saw the inconsistency between the history of Jesus

in the fourth Gospel and that given in the Synoptics, the contradiction between the introduction to John's Gospel and the birth stories of the Synoptics Matthew and Luke, were stigmatised as Alogians, "Deniers of the Word." Others made a feeble attempt at New Testament criticism and held that we have a record of little more than a single year of the ministry of Jesus; still others, with quite excusable rationalism, said of the Apocalypse, "Of what use is it all?" In this group must be placed Theodotus of Rome and that other Theodotus who came to Rome from Bysance; their disciples we know as Asclepiades, Hermophiles, and Apollonides.

But attention is chiefly riveted by the brilliant career and acute intellectual gymnastic of Zenobia's officer, Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch, A.D. 260–270. His doctrine was much hurt by his vanity; yet the record of this must be not too credulously received. For the most part he and all others whom the councils of the fourth century condemned are known to us, like Celsus, that early scientific and speculative genius, only from the statements of those who have left us the condemnation of their heresies. They all knew "the gentle art of making enemies";

and the enemies wrote their histories. Paul of Samosata may well stand for all the rest. His views are thus summed up by Pressensé, a Trinitarian writer:

"The Bishop of Antioch carried out the principles of Theodotus and Artemon (monarchianism) to their extreme consequences. He lowered the dignity of Christ so far as to liken him to a mere man. Denying his pre-existence, he admitted no distinction of persons in the Godhead. The Logos was for him simply the consciousness which God has of Himself, not a separate Person but the simple consciousness of His own personality. In this sense man is the image of God, but he can never attain to essence with the Divine Being, not even by Jesus Christ. There was a positive action of the Word upon the man Jesus. The Spirit of God had descended upon him, but this action was merely an influence and did not imply unity of essence. Jesus was indeed born of a virgin, but he was none the less in his nature a man like other men, with this difference, that he realised holiness and thus merited the grace of God in extraordinary measure. The Divine Logos animated him by inspiration, but was not incarnate in him. 'Wisdom,' said Paul of Samosata, 'did not enter into substantial union with human nature.' Thus the difference between Jesus Christ and other men is relative only. Wisdom simply dwelt in him in an exceptional manner, and it was by the measure of this Divine communication alone that he was raised above ourselves. How, indeed, can it be maintained that Jesus is the Son of God? Is not that name already given to the Eternal Wisdom? It would follow that there

must be two Sons of God, in the absolute sense, which is impossible. Jesus was not, therefore, the Son of God when he was born of the virgin, but acquired that high dignity by virtue of his holiness. The Word was greater than Jesus, but Jesus was exalted by Wisdom. 'There was no other mode of union between various natures and various persons except that which proceeds from the will, remaining pure from sin. Christ enjoyed union with God, and this oneness of the will in love is far higher than mere unity of nature. Jesus is the ideal man who flashes before our eyes the purest rays of Divine wisdom.'"

With this utterance of the third century compare the words of James Martineau, preeminently the prophet of the Unitarian faith of to-day:

"When it is said, of this personal appearance of divine qualities of mind on the theatre and under the conditions of human life, that the 'Word' itself was 'made flesh and dwelt among us,' the phrase simply affirms that these qualities are not mere earth-born and animal phenomena, but are really the living word of a heavenly sphere, and speak of God. This is no more 'a figure of speech' than the plainest sentence we can frame respecting things transcendent. I know not whether others can draw a sharp line of separation between the human spirit and the divine, and can clearly say where their own soul ends and God's communion begins. But for myself, with closest thought, I confess my darkness; and can only say that somehow He stirs among our higher affections and mingles with the action of our

proper nature. If in Christ this divine margin was not simply broader than elsewhere, but spread until it covered the whole soul, and brought the human into moral coalescence with the divine, then was God not merely represented by a foreign and resembling being, but personally there, giving expression to His spiritual nature, as in the visible universe to His causal power."

This comparison of utterances sixteen hundred years apart gives to the Unitarianism of Paul of Samosata no mean distinction.

We find the same insistence upon moral union with God in Artemon and in Beryllus, Bishop of Bostra. We are inclined to suspect there was good foundation for the statement of Artemon that this view was the faith of all the bishops of Rome to the time of Victor, the thirteenth in order, whose successor, Zephyrinus, formulated the Catholic theory, thereby corrupting the simplicity of faith. Zephyrinus was himself no more orthodox, but inclined to the opposite extreme of Patripassianism. This claim of Artemon has much to support it in the writers of the second century, writers who lie under no suspicion of heresy.

A curious testimony to this early faith as Unitarian is to be found in Tertullian, who admits that his view is not easily or generally apprehended by the believers. His admission is singularly convincing. He says :

"The simple (I will not call them unwise and unlearned) who always constitute the majority of believers, are startled at the *οἰκονομία* (or dispensation of the three in one) on the ground that their very rule of faith withdraws them from the world's plurality of gods to the one only true God; not understanding that, although He is an only God, He must yet be believed in with His own *οἰκονομία*. The numerical order and distribution of the Trinity they assume to be a division of the Unity; whereas the Unity which draws the Trinity out of its own self is so far from being destroyed that it is actually supported by it. They are constantly throwing out against us that we are preachers of two gods and three gods, while they take to themselves pre-eminently the credit of being worshippers of the one God."

Tertullian is referring to the common people to whom the Supreme and Eternal One, revealed in Jesus Christ His Son, was the ground of faith, and to whom no definition of God's inner Being, no theory of a new God in the world, could yet remove the conviction that a *new sense of God and a new regard for man* was the contribution Christianity had made to the world's happiness.

With this view we find a striking agreement in documents admitted to be the most precious relics of the faith of this time. *The letter to Diognetus* holds high rank, as a record of the faith of the second century, but there is no Trinitarianism in it. The *Teaching of the*

Twelve belongs to the same century, but the "Mighty Maker" and his "servant Jesus" sufficiently explain baptism in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost as no declaration of Trinity in Unity. Even the celebration of the divinity in Christ which we encounter in Justin is not confused by any effort to make him the equal of the Father. For Justin declares: "We worship and love next to God the Logos that is from the unbegotten and unutterable Deity, since for us he became man that he might share our sufferings and effect our cure"

What is called "Origen's Platonic taint" accords better with the thought of the third century at large than with what is expected of it by later controversialists. To Origen

"God is the One Absolute Being, not supra-cosmic only but transcendental, the self-existent and self-sufficing monad, who alone contemplates Himself in unchanging perfection, called in Scripture the Father. Even the Logos does not contemplate the Father as the Father contemplates Himself. The Son and Spirit are not necessary to the Father so far as He is absolute God, but only so far as He is Love, Father, Creator."

Here begins to appear the triumph of Greek philosophising over the simplicity of Christian

faith in its devotion to the person of Jesus Christ and its defence of his ideals with ethical passion. Origen and Tertullian are far nearer to the Nicene speculation than their contemporary, Minucius Felix, who in that gem of dialogue, *Octavius*, omits all the doctrines upon which the others most insist. He knows nothing of the Trinity, and hints only at the divinity of Christ or of the Holy Spirit. It is entertaining to hear the complaint of those who would use his apology for Christianity, that while "none of the apologies is so elegant, none is so barren of distinctive teaching; . . . as a statement of the Christian case it is extremely incomplete"; yet those who have deprived us of so much touching the second and third centuries have carefully preserved this apology of the age of Severus (225 A.D.) answering the charges made by Cæcilius against Christianity. We cannot make the writers of the third century speak the metaphysics of the post-Nicene Church. If we find a gratification of later claims in Origen and Tertullian and Athanasius, we find the failure of such expectation in most of the others. Even these champions of the Trinity are inconsistent with the orthodoxy of a later time. They repeat-

edly refer to the fall of man, which Jesus never did, so far as any record shows; but they did not make it the foundation of their system of thought as does modern orthodoxy, which collapses upon the disappearance of the original apostasy from innocence in Eden. These strenuous advocates of the Nicene tendency did not argue from the total corruption of human nature an atonement in any of the modern uses of the term; they did not reason from ruin to redemption, but rather from the original order and ideal to its realisation in Jesus Christ. According to Origen the ransom for man is paid to Satan by God. "The general characteristics of the theology of the second and third centuries are still liberty and diversity upon the common ground of a living faith in Christ."

Platonism had made God inaccessible, the later Greek thought made God inconceivable. It remained for Roman Imperialism to make God unlovable. So, in a sense the Patripassians never dreamed, the Church "sacrificed the Father" in the ardent longing to have a God lovable enough to be counted human, loving enough to be deemed Divine.

There can be no proper orthodoxy where there is no uniformity in the Church, and that

no unity in this sense existed is easily shown. As late as the second half of the second century "catholic" does not mean "orthodox" but "universal." It looks to church-extension, but does not imply uniformity of thought or form. Melito, who seems to recent writers the perfection of orthodoxy, was not orthodox to Origen or Tertullian. Origen was not orthodox to Tertullian, nor was Tertullian to the Bishop of Rome. His pupil Cyprian defies Roman interference with Carthage; Minucius Felix omits the doctrines upon which both Origen and Tertullian insist. The *Shepherd of Hermas* seemed to Irenæus in line with scripture, but Tertullian thought it a recital of "weak visions" and treated it with scorn. This difference was expressed by the parties to the contention in language neither elegant in form nor Christian in spirit.

The struggle against heresy was a struggle for the unity of God, which was endangered by dualism, and for the real humanity of Christ, which was endangered by those who made his earthly life a mere phantom, "an envelope for God." The Fathers were not always clear as to their own belief or clear in its expression, but they saw what imperilled its essential principles; these, prevailing from

first to last, are the absolute being of God and the real human life of Christ. On these points the Church maintained its faith and united, while dividing everywhere else.

Uniformity is not more evident if we turn to the councils. The synods between the Nicene Council, A.D. 325, and that at Constantinople, A.D. 381, were utterly without agreement as to what had been done at Nicæa; the council of Ephesus, A.D. 431, repudiated the work of Constantinople fifty years earlier and forbade the use of any other creed than the Nicene, promulgated in A.D. 325. Thus today that late creed called "Athanasian" is under the interdict of the very council which determined the Nicene supremacy, and the church which recites both in one service recites creeds which mutually exclude each other.

The statement of Dr. Martineau, "To see the process of the formation of a doctrine is already to behold its dissolution," comes constantly before the mind in such a survey as this. When you have the Egyptian triad, you have the easy illustration of what is soon to be the Christian Trinity. When you read the doom of Osiris and how his merits are claimed for the Osirians, you already have the

germ of the vicarious atonement. The struggle between the pictorial triad (Egyptian) and the philosophical trinity (Greek) is, from the latter part of the third century, the problem to be solved by speculative minds in the Christian Church. In its lowest form the result is mere tritheism, and so expresses itself in Art. In its subtler form it is mere metaphysics, and separates itself from the human soul in the very effort at definition and symbolism. Unity loses its ethical value; its service to the intellect also declines, and that confusion ensues in spite of which Christian thought has been crystalline in its moments of devotion, while turbid in its efforts at theological uniformity. The centre of gravity was shifted, and men declared that intellectual accuracy is orthodoxy, while a holy life, without orthodoxy, is "the devil's way of serving poison in a clean cup." As in Egyptian, so in Christian thought:

"All that was needed was one more effort of abstraction, to put above and behind the triad the Being in whom it was resumed and into whom, so to speak, it melted; that higher Unity was sometimes found in the First Person of the triad, regarded as reproducing itself by eternal generation; sometimes in a 'Spirit more spiritual than the gods'; the holy soul which clothes itself with forms, but itself remains unkonwn.'—G. d'Alviella, Hibbert Lectures, 1891.

In the period we are surveying, there appears a singular event. Rome is no longer the imperial centre, except for the Church. Constantinople grasps the sceptre and holds the throne. The world is Christian, but in a sense Jesus never knew and his apostles never intended. Alaric is Christian — and a barbarian. Honorius is a Christian theologian— and a craven soul. Soon there will be no empire but that of the Pope, an empire he disputes with the Eastern kings of Constantinople, — a Christian empire in which Christ would have found a speedier crucifixion. It is the age of the great apostasy! An apostasy which boasted its orthodoxy and proved it upon the bodies of all who differed with its exponents. An apostasy beyond doubt, in that the unity of God had been lost to philosophic thought, and the Fatherhood of God sounded strange to hearts foreign to all compassion. The Brotherhood of Man had been swallowed up by the unclean doctrine of total depravity. The sublime doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the purifier of the heart had sunk into the theory of the dispensation of the Holy Ghost as a prerogative of the Church. The religion of the Man of Nazareth had been transformed into conflicting theories about his

person, for which councils contended with blows and scandalous uproar.

The simple religion which had transfigured the life of Israel's last great prophet, and from that pure heart of boundless benevolence had gone out to bless the world, — this stream of pure affection, sprung at once from the remote past and flowing afresh from the crystal fount of a sublime life, had now sunk as a desert stream in the sand. The stream was lost for ages underground, reappearing at intervals as a spring to flow for a little way, but lost again and again in subtilties of speculation or impurities of life, or used only to move the machinery of Christian institutions.

Secular history calls the ages beginning with the sixth century "dark." But the history of the Church closes its short day before the light declines upon the imperial countenance of Constantine; when his politic edict is uttered the Church has confessed that endorsement by a murderer can give it peace. The scenes of the arena show no longer the calm courage of martyrs upon the one side and the fierce hunger of the wild beasts upon the other. The conflict is transferred to the councils, where the antagonists all make the sign of the cross but shout opposing battle-cries of

doctrinal contention; where surely "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Holiness of life is as nothing; but lips false in all other things speak the shibboleth without stammering. The Church has decreed what *shall be* the rule of faith since it has forsaken what *was* the rule of faith. Solemn processions march to the sanctuaries singing the doctrines in Greek doggerel; one party led by a gaunt Arian, the other by a fat eunuch of the Empress, meet in the streets of Alexandria and stone each other, while cries of "homoiousian" and "homoousian" proclaim that "they slay each other for *an iota*."

The Athanasian doctrine is at the flood, but it will find its ebb within this fourth century. While the Arian emperors re-establish the mongrel doctrines of Arianism, there appears upon the sky the afterglow of Paganism which Julian vainly calls a new dawn, not knowing that the sun of Paganism is set. At the centres of power, Arianism again declines, but its missionaries are carrying a conviction that they teach "the truth of the Old Christians" to the hearts of the Goths. In the far-off forests of central Europe the work of Ulfilas shall last when the decrees of the Arian emperors have been revoked at Rome.

The century closes; as the torn scroll of its achievement is rolled together we read that the Empire is divided between East and West; the great schools of theology are forging the arms for new contentions. Upon the vacant throne of Roman Imperialism in the West sits the Bishop of Rome. The world is Christian according to its own confession, and Pagan according to every test which the life of Jesus and his great words about God's love can supply. Two sounds accompany the opening decade of the new century. Alaric strikes with his sword-hilt upon the gates of Rome and demands the surrender of the Imperial City to the barbarian. Safe behind the marshes of Ravenna, the Emperor Honorius clucks to his chickens in their golden cages. The Church has gained a creed and lost an Empire. Its monotheism has been swamped by its explanations about God. The reality of God is obscured by its definitions. Orthodoxy is established among the ruins of a divided Church. The perdition which had been declared to be the punishment of sin has now become the penalty of a mistake. The only heresy which has nothing to recommend it is now universal,—*the heresy which declares that intellectual accuracy is the condition of*

salvation, and a formula of belief the guarantee of religion.

The *unity* of faith perished in a struggle for uniformity of statement. Henceforward the simplicity of religion in its earliest Unitarian thought is to be obscured and complicated by contentions as to what is the true opinion. The critic takes the place of the believer—and for fifteen centuries "the battle of the Churches" is waged.

CHAPTER V

WHY DO CHRISTIANS DIFFER?

THE battle of the churches is over. If not in complete peace, we are at least, in a condition of unarmed neutrality. There is a uniform and widespread armistice proclaimed. There is no confusion, except in the minds of a few, concerning the vital questions of religion; indeed, some of us sometimes fear that there is inertia, stagnation, in the place of wholesome agitation. And yet, we are not of the number who seek to project a conflict. Rather let the pools of thought cleanse themselves by the freshets of contemporary opinion flowing into them. Let not any devout soul stir them, lest, if there be stagnation, their miasma get abroad, and lest they simply settle down to their own sediment again. Rather let the new streams of contemporary thought flush them out, while we watch to see the progress of the human mind.

I call attention now to certain reasons

for the critical attitude prevailing in spite of these conditions that I have named. How is it that the faith held by a great number in the world of modern thought becomes a subject of dispute and criticism in other minds? How does criticism of Unitarianism arise?

First, then, because of a *misplaced emphasis* in those critical minds. What a sentence means depends largely upon its emphasis, and what a mind means depends largely upon its emphasis; and when the emphasis is laid in the wrong place, however actively the mind may express itself, it expresses itself to small purpose. It is difficult for two minds, differently emphasising what they consider important, to get together, to see alike, to say the same thing, to be in unison; and much of the criticism to which I shall refer in the following pages is due to a misplaced emphasis in religion.

For instance, it is never said that people of our way of thinking are immoral. On the contrary, we are accused of having "mere morality." What "mere morality" may be, in a universe so closely knit together in its parts as this in which we live, I fail to understand. How morality can be other than the guarantee of religion, it is difficult to determine. But we

are never called immoral. It would be a vain attack which should take that form. For, however the saintliness in those who are saintly may be accused of being only "good form," it is good form still; and I suspect it is good form in the Kingdom of Heaven. So the emphasis is not laid upon life at all. The objection is not made that we do not live well, that we do not behave well, that we do not deport ourselves consonantly with the interests of society. We are not accused of being law-breakers or offenders against any code of good behaviour. On the contrary, we are said to be quite complacent and well-behaved people; we are accused of being *too* serene and undisturbed. That is not true; and to the answer of that criticism I shall come later on. The emphasis of the critic is misplaced; it is laid upon doctrine and not upon life. If the emphasis were laid on life, then the exactness of our deportment, the rectitude of our behaviour, the integrity of our method, the whole moral tenor of our life would receive the emphasis; for, after all, the business of life is living, and Matthew Arnold was inside the truth when he said: "conduct is three-fourths of life." I should say it is the other fourth also, and that conduct is all there

is of life. Whatever may inspire the conduct, whatever may grace the conduct, whatever may adorn the conduct or may result from the conduct, still, after all, I am conducting *my life* on a given principle.

Now, the emphasis, if laid on doctrine, misses altogether what life means. What is doctrine? It is a more or less accurate definition of how one man interprets religion to another man. If men were isolate and alone, separate, secluded, each man might be able to conduct his religious life on terms of the highest rectitude, without the necessity for definition. But the moment another man appears and says, "Why do you worship, and whom? What do you believe, and why? What are the motives of action, and how did you come by them? What is the experience of life in its highest terms?" immediately there must be definition. In other words, I must define or delimit, draw a line round and make a demarcation of the whole plat of my thinking. I must map out my mind to the man who inquires, so that he will know where to find me on this or that aspect of life. That is definition. But when a man comes and says, "Now you have not the right definition," it is like saying to a cook who is preparing a

repast, which is, by the proof of her experience, likely to be a very delicious repast, "But you have not the right recipe." She points to the viands, and says, "Why? They are edible, delicious, approved by the household." So somebody who thinks definition is the thing, — that the recipe is the food, that the prescription is the medicine, — arraigns another man on the ground that he has not the right definition. It is exactly like one who has found a new star by the telescope in the observatory being accused by another astronomer, who has been working on the matter mathematically to see where the star ought to be in the sidereal universe, that he has not shown the formula by which the calculation was made, by which the star was discovered. He says to him, "You cannot give the definition; you cannot state the formula." The other man turns to him and says, "*There is the star!*" So the emphasis is laid on the wrong thing when laid upon accuracy of statement, upon definition, upon opinion. These all change, and human life, with a certainty that is simply sublime, goes on calmly ripening its experiences, developing its powers, and assuring itself by converse with reality.

The emphasis is misplaced not only in the

fact that doctrine is put instead of life, but also because the objector is often *not concerned about the right thing.* If you are concerned about the saving of your soul, as the major part of the Christian Church used to be concerned, then the emphasis is misplaced, for you cannot save your soul. If you are ever saved, your soul will do it. You could just as well talk about a man, saving his seed-wheat by keeping it in his barn. He saved it; and his field has grown up to grass. He has not any harvest, but he has saved his seed-wheat. Another man does not save it at all, but flings it into the ground, which he has ploughed and harrowed, prepared and mellowed, until it is ready for just that kind of thing that seed-wheat is. He flings it away and says, "I don't want to save it"; but the next autumn the abundant harvest of his rich acres will show that his seed-wheat saved him. It is just so with the soul. You cannot "save your soul" without "losing it." If you are ever saved your soul will be the saving power; and it will not be saved, in my judgment, unless it is worth it. So that, if the emphasis is laid upon salvation, in the sense of taking care of your immortal soul, the result, when it is not ludicrous, is tragic;

and the objector who comes and says, "You don't try to save your soul," is quite right. We do not. That is not our business. God put into man the breath of life, and said to him, "Save your kind." So the emphasis of the objector is laid in the wrong place, because it is laid on the wrong thing. He is not concerned about the right object of life, which is not saving one's self, but saving the other man. Swim ashore, let the other man drown! stand dripping, and see him go down! That is the attitude of a man who wants to save his soul. The business of life is to get a grip on something that is not strong enough to strike out for itself. The whole business of life is to make the world better. I think that God did not make it very well in the beginning, simply to give us a task; just as, in the old legend, He brought the creatures before the first man, it is said, "to see what he would call them." That is a touch of comedy in the ancient story. He made them pass before Adam "to see what he would call them," and when he had given them all names, God said to him, "This garden is for you to cultivate. Let yourselves be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. Cultivate and dress the garden." And ever since the

first work-day in the world, the business of life has been to carry on what God started, but did not make complete. We are therefore "workers together with God"; and when we are objected to on the ground that we are not saving our souls, we answer: "From the time of Channing in the century that has just passed, until now, the emphasis has been upon public life among us. From the days of Tuckerman in the last century, until now, the emphasis has been upon scientific, organised, capable work with our fellows in what is now known as organised charity; and in our own theological schools, so much is this emphasis understood that in each of them there is a chair of Sociology, on the ground that a minister who knows theology and does not know sociology is only a half-equipped man." Indeed, I think all theology might be left one side, provided we knew about folk and worked upon our fellows for the bettering of the world. The business of religion is to add zest to life, to make it so well worth living, in the religious man's estimation, that he shall hunger in heart to make it more worth while to the other man. So this misplaced emphasis is the first reason for the arising of criticism.

The second reason for its appearance is *ignorance.* One body of Christians criticises another, largely because of the lack of exact knowledge. Now, ignorance is a very relative term. A banker would be perfectly justified in saying to the clergyman: "Your specialty is not banking; therefore I hold you to be, from my standpoint, ignorant." But the clergyman might retort, "Your business is not knowing the philosophy of religion, the history of theology. You are not dealing continually with the souls of men at first hand, in that perpetual confession that comes into a minister's life; therefore, so far as my vocation is concerned, I hold you to be an ignorant man." And so it would run all the way through. The musician says to the man who sings four different tunes to the four lines of a hymn, "You are ignorant of music." He is quite right. The only trouble with the man is that he is not dumb as well, so that he attempt not the impossible. The artist says to the people in the inartistic walks of life who cannot understand a black-and-white drawing, who cannot see anything in it, but must have something that is in sharp contrasts of color, "You have not an artistic appreciation." He is quite right. Ignorance is a movable term. So I

say of people who offer criticism of us, they are ignorant about the thing of which they are talking. Let me tell you what they ought to know in order to be competent to offer opinions of a critical kind on the Unitarian faith.

They ought to know the struggle of soul which comes to one who wants to find God for himself. They may have that; they must have that in order to offer an opinion about anybody's religion. Then they should know the first three centuries of Christianity better than the last three centuries of human history, or as well, if they are particularly apt as historical students. In the next place, they should be experts in Biblical criticism, both of the Old and the New Testaments, and have a large general knowledge of universal religion. They should be more or less familiar with the great ethnic faiths; should know the Dhammapada approximately as well as the Sermon on the Mount; should know the Bhavagadghita approximately as well as the Gospels of the New Testament; should know the Vedic Hymns as well as the hymns of the Christian Church. When they are dealing in criticism of people who claim to go back to universal religion, to deal with things at first hand, who do not care

for sacerdotalism of any kind or institutional life as affecting the Church, then they must know these things and many others. And if they do not know these, and, nevertheless, offer their criticism, they are simply skimming the surface of their minds. It is very impromptu,—very much like an improvisation of criticism about an historic fact.

Ignorance may be of another kind,— ignorance of the motive-power of the religion criticised. There is a vast deal of that. For instance, take the administration of the United States, for illustration,—to venture upon delicate ground. If I am a critic of the administration of my country, I should not only have, as in the other matter just referred to, as much knowledge of the facts as the administration has, so that, if I were given the opportunity, I could step into the Cabinet and bear my share of the responsibility, take the portfolio of the Secretary of the Navy or of the Treasury, and bear my part in the place of the absentee whose place I have taken,—I must not only know all these facts, but I must understand, in addition to them, the motive and genius and method of the administration in a given period. I must know what it never has told to any man. I must know what it hopes to achieve in the

end, which does not yet appear as a matter of history. That is the reason some of us feel impatience with critics of great national questions,—that they have no trust except in the edge of their own scalpel, and they dissect and dismember and criticise without knowledge, because they are ignorant, first, of the facts which to-morrow's paper may contradict, as they apprehend them; and, second, of the motive and genius of administration, which lies behind the things that are being done. So in religious movements; for religion has a motive-power; it is directed toward a definite end; it seeks to achieve by a given method a given result. Just as in Rome you say the motive was power; in Greece you say the motive was art; in the Orient the motive was meditation, and in the Occident the motive is enterprise; so in every division of the human family you discover the motive, and then have the key to unlock the secrets of its history. So, in every religious movement there is a conviction that characterises it, a method of thinking that belongs to it. I think Edward Everett Hale is not far wrong when he says that the establishment of an Unitarian Church in a town means increased facilities in the sanitation of that neighbourhood. It

means also a tightening up of the whole of life's obligations; it means a simplifying of the terms of religion.

Still another reason for criticism among Christians is *the dependence upon authority.* Usually the critic is somebody who is quoting somebody else. He is "a scribe and a Pharisee" in that sense. They marvelled at the teaching of Jesus, because he spoke "as one *having* authority, and not as their scribes," who always quoted something somebody else said. So the critic is quoting his criticism. Students of literature know how true that is. You sometimes stumble upon a man who "knows everything there is in Shakespeare." I came upon such a man the other day, and he commenced to recite Shakespeare to me; but as he made two or three radical blunders, not in reading, but in the meaning of the text, I did not remain. I could not afford the time. He was a simple Shakespeare parrot, without its colours and its excuse for being. So those who are studying literary criticism, as every man in the ministry must, know perfectly well that for the most part the critics are retailing some ancient opinion about the thing in hand, and when you get a man who deals with the matter at

first hand you receive a kind of shock. The conclusions of such a critic may not be exact; but he is dealing with things at first hand.

So the critic of a religious kind is often simply a quoting person, who says, "Dr. So-and-so said," or, "The commentator of such a period has said," or, "This or that Church holds concerning you." Send him away until he can come with something which is his own. A friend of mine heard a distinguished English preacher in a cathedral in the Orient, and she came away saying, "The Canon said 'this is the received doctrine of the Church,' 'the Church has always held,' 'It is com-commonly believed amongst us,' but he says nothing of what he himself believes." Then the distinguished preacher was accosted by his friend who heard this statement and repeated it to him, saying, "My daughter says you said nothing out of your mind this morning, but said, 'The common opinion is,' 'The Church has always held,'" his answer was, "How very acute! Few persons would have observed it!" That is trifling. That just escapes being wicked by being inane. A man with the serious business of life on hand covers his statement with quotation marks, as though he knew nothing of

his own mind! That is the usual attitude of the critic of another man's religion. He is retailing at a lower price something that he has found, and therefore can afford to sell it below the market value. It was not a discovery on his part. He did not make it. He did not dig it out. He simply picked it up. It was not his. He then passed it along with just a little acid added. Now, if there is anything more useless than that, I do not happen to remember at this moment what it is.

Finally, criticism of one form of faith by another often has its root in denominational pride. I can understand anybody's being proud of what has been achieved. We ride with Paul Revere because he dared, and stand with "the embattled farmers" at Lexington because they dared. We review the great periods of our national history because it is something done, something achieved. We take up the autobiography of Booker Washington, *Up from Slavery*, and follow the boy from his almost unknown beginning until he becomes the most useful man of his race in America, because it is something done, something accomplished. But why should anybody get excited about a table of statistics? Shown by the census, the cost of church building in this

country, proportionate to the number engaged, falls first on the Jew, and then on the Unitarian. But it was a mere matter of fact; not a subject for boasting. Or when great annual meetings are held by denominations, to recite their achievements of increasing membership, of churches built, of enriched liturgy, of whatever it may be, it is a thing to be allowed by a sane mind, but it cannot be very interesting to anybody that has anything to do. I am reminded of the dialogue between Emerson and Lowell on top of the tower of Notre Dame in Paris. Emerson was talking about Alcott, and he said to Lowell, "I asked Alcott what he had ever *done*. He said he had written so and so, he had thought this and that. 'But,' I said, 'What have you ever *done?*' And then," said Emerson, "the Brahmin turned to me and said, 'If Pythagoras should come to Concord, whom would he ask to see?'" There you have it. You say that is colossal self-conceit. Well, it is the same thing as denominational pride. It is the "counting of the hosts of the Lord." It is as the old story in that charming legend of Gideon, who, when he found there were ten thousand who were ready to take sword against the enemies of Jehovah, had impressed upon him by the Divine command that there were

too many, and so he led them down to the stream, and nine thousand seven hundred flung themselves down upon their faces and swilled the water out of the stream as a preparation for battle, and three hundred lapped it out of their hands, drinking as a dog drinks; and these three hundred were chosen. The feeling comes upon the human mind that not numbers, nor institutions, nor popularity, nor fashionable adherents, nor anything else counts, but simply ability to swing the weapon and cut your way through; and denominational pride has much to do with the criticism which says, "Why, you are one of the smallest denominations on the face of the earth." We had not denied that fact; and sometimes that church that rates us as small, is itself only sixth in the order of denominations of the country at large, but swells in numbers where religion is made easy and popular and fashionable.

So when we examine the criticisms that we are to analyse in these succeeding chapters, we have to bear in mind that they arise either from misplaced emphasis, or from the domination of fear, or from denominational pride, or from some merely meretricious and external thing, and that therefore, whilst they do not hurt us, they ought to be considered

for the benefit of those, most of all, who, being almost as uninformed as the critic, are more easily affected by the criticism itself.

CHAPTER VI

WHAT IS IT TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST?

I APPROACH the subject with some diffidence, not because I am not sure of what Unitarians believe respecting Jesus of Nazareth, but because it is so easy, when one is touched to the quick by such a criticism as this, to put into the answer a little more feeling than a judicial attitude of mind would warrant. For this is about the only thing that is said against us that we care for. We do care when people say that we do not believe in Christ, and for various reasons.

In the first place, we are sorry that people should make such a mistake, because the mistake hurts them. It cannot hurt us except in one way, and that is, it keeps reverent people from coming to us who have nowhere else to go. There are many people who have fallen out of line with much of the received doctrine of the churches called Evangelical, who are hindered from allying themselves with the

Unitarian method of life and faith, because they believe when it is said that Unitarians do not believe in Christ that something true has been said. And we lament this; although we are not given to proselyting and do not care to make many disciples for disciples-sake; we feel with Emerson when he was reproached with having no disciples at the end of twenty-five years of teaching, and said, "What should I do with them if they came to me? I should have to send them back to themselves." So discipleship for discipleship's sake does not appeal to us. But, in spite of this, we have a hospitable faith. We do desire to receive among ourselves those whom we may help; and when reverent people, who are the only people we care about having come, are kept away by the false statement that we do not believe in Christ, we mourn for their sakes that about the only place where they could have a reverent attitude toward Christ, having given up the other forms of faith, has been shut to them by this aspersion which is not true.

There is another reason why this criticism touches us. It gives us a feeling of hopelessness about the religious education of the world. When a thing so simple is so completely

misunderstood, it makes one feel that nothing can be explained; and that if such a mistake, with so small an occasion, with such an abandonment of all proper inquiry, can be made, almost any mistake might be made that hinders the religious education of the world.

So much for the subject, which I approach with diffidence, as I say, because I shall try not to put into it that deep feeling with respect to the criticism which we all feel when it is made, for reasons a part of which I have given.

We come immediately to the inquiry, What would it be not to believe in Christ? There are only three ways in which it is possible for a human soul not to believe in Christ.

The first is to believe that he never existed; and a very large school—the Tübingen school of criticism, led by Strauss and Baur—for a whole generation maintained "the mythical theory" with regard to the gospel narratives of the life of Christ. It only needed fresh insight into history, and new study of the gospels to dismiss that "mythical" theory. It is not held by any German scholar to-day, so far as I know. I believe there is one man in the University of Berlin who holds it with a kind of attenuated adherence, and claims the "mythical" theory of the life of Christ; but of this I

am not quite sure. But the school of Strauss and Baur, however useful they may have been, —Strauss being made familiar to readers of English through the translation of his *Life of Jesus* by George Eliot,—was only for a time. It was an evanescent protest against the historical Jesus. There are a few unthinking people—people who do not read, nor study, nor think things down to the ground—who believe that Jesus never existed. They might be said not to believe in Christ; and the remedy for them would be to put into their hands the argument of an English Ecclesiastic, who applied the same theory and system of reasoning to Napoleon Bonaparte and proved that he never existed. That is the easy answer to those people, whose theory is based in sophistry and lapse of logic, the assumption of premises that are not premises, and then the application to them of a logical process, which may be accurate enough when the false premise is admitted. So that if it were true of Unitarians that they did not believe that Jesus ever lived, they might be said not to believe in Christ. But, on the contrary, if there is one body of people, one set of scholars, who have rescued the historical Jesus from the enwrapping, disfiguring disguises of theology, it

is the people of our faith. We have re-established as a historical verity the life and method of life of Jesus Christ; so in that sense it cannot be said that we do not believe in Christ.

There is a second way in which it might be true that one did not believe in Christ. It might be said that one did not believe in Christ who agreed that he did exist, but that he was not such a character as he was represented to be. That is, that the stories of the Gospels and the other writings of the New Testament gave a roseate hue to a life that was not really as it was represented. That would mean that the writers out of their own consciousness had evolved a character for which no actuality existed, no possible authority could be given. They would be exactly in the situation of the man who "evolved the camel out of his own consciousness." It was a creature unknown to zoölogy, absolutely unrepresented in any museum or menagerie; but he evolved the camel out of his own consciousness—he had a camel-consciousness. So that if one were to say that Christ did exist, but was not the character he was represented to be, such a person might be said not to believe in Christ. On the contrary, we have taken pains to find out what his character was;

we have discriminated between the documents; we have separated them by the keen edge of critical discernment, saying that such and such things could not possibly be true of him, because they are inconsistent with the consensus of what his character was. We have put away from him those things which tradition had attached to him as a reproach. For this reason the Church set aside all the Apocryphal gospels, not because there was nothing good in them, but because the consensus of them was untrue to the Gospels of the New Testament which gave us the character of Jesus. So in that sense it cannot be said that Unitarians do not believe in Christ.

The third way, and only other way I can conceive of in which one may not believe in Christ, is, though he admit that Christ did exist and was just the character described in the Gospels, that he deliberately say, "That is not the kind of character that I desire; that is not the sort of leader I will have; that is not the Saviour I want; he is nothing to me! His open-handed generosity taught the trusteeship of all good gifts from God; I prefer to grab everything in sight and keep it for my own. Instead of being the disburser of God's mercies, I prefer to be the grave of God's

mercies. If he says, 'Blessed are the peacemakers,' I prefer war. I believe the sword is the arbiter of human destiny; not reason nor the spirit of love." So such a mind might run through all those splendid utterances which constitute the law of human life, and say, "I will have none of it. His character does not please me. His leadership shall not lead me. I will go my own way in spite of him, although he lived and was such a character as he is represented to be." That man would emphatically be chargeable with not believing in Christ.

These are the three ways in which one may not believe in Christ. First, that he did not exist; second, if he existed, he was not the person described, third, if he existed and was the person described, he was not the kind of person to love and follow.

Now, having dismissed those three as utterly inapplicable to our state of mind, I ask you, What is it to believe in him?

The first business of the believer is to know what he believes. A general, vague susceptibility to anything that comes our way is not faith. That is credulity. That is what happens in a street when the rain flushes it with water and the sewers are open. Everything

runs whither gravitation tends, into any opening that appears. That is the attitude of simple credulity; it is not the attitude of faith. No utterly credulous person can be a believer. A real believer must have as one of the elements of his belief the element of scepticism. That is, he must be an inquirer. He must understand the difference between this and that. He must carefully discriminate in terms that make him sure; so that, when he has weeded his garden, he shall enjoy the flowers; when he has picked off the defective fruit, the fruit that is forming shall have strength to grow; so that when he has cleaned up his mind, the things he holds to, he holds to tenaciously, and with a grasp that nothing can loosen. The first condition of believing in anything is to be sure of it. For that reason we claim that we pre-eminently believe in Christ, because we try to realise what he was. The very first thing to that end is to acquaint one's self with the documents that tell about his life. No man has any standing in any case who argues it out of his prejudices. No man has any right to expect a hearing upon any subject who does not know the elements which go to make it up. In law, he has no standing in court; in philosophy, he has no standing in

learning; in literature, he is a mere pot-boiler, as we say of the man who writes for what he can get, without any reference to the facts of the case;—he will write a historical novel in which if the characters came to life they would be utterly lost in the situations portrayed. So with all the other conditions of learning. We must examine the facts. We must get at the basis. We must reason the thing down to the ground. We must go back to "the law and the testimony," as the old phrase is; and, examining the Gospels, and the Epistles of Paul, and the other related documents of the New Testament, and the writings of the earliest Fathers of the Church, we try to set Jesus of Nazareth against his own background, to put him in his own belongings; to make him not a Greek philosopher, when he was a Jew and a peasant and a carpenter; to make him not a nineteenth-century man when he belonged to the first century; to make him the thing he was by getting at what we call "local colour" and the atmosphere of his human life. That is the first condition, and the man who attempts anything else, or neglects this and then delivers himself authoritatively with regard to the life of Jesus of Nazareth, has no standing with students. He is talking out of

his prejudices. He is skimming the top of his mind. He is merely putting his feelings into words. He illustrates what Froude says, that "Reason is no match for superstition, and one great emotion must be expelled by another." So the only help for such a man is to have the flood-tide of some great emotion visit him, and then he may perhaps be driven back to find what Jesus really was in the records of the Gospels and the history of the early Church. No man can realise what Jesus really was unless he discriminate between the historical Jesus and the theological Christ. The attitude of Jesus himself toward the Messiahship seems to have changed during his ministry. The records of the early part of his ministry do not seem to apply to the latter part of it. There is a growing revelation of what Jesus thought himself to be, which we must deal with most carefully, with discrimination and most studious attention, most loving and affectionate reverence. The man who does not do that simply cannot be reckoned with,—that is all. So the first business of believing in Jesus is to learn who he was. This brings us at once into collision with very sincere people who do not think as we do. In the first place, we are in collision with the

people who worship the theological Christ, but who will admit, when questioned, that if they had been present when Jesus of Nazareth was on the earth, and had attempted to say their prayers to him, with his Jewish parentage and Jewish training, and his abandon to the unity of God as expressed in the great Shema which he uttered every day of his life, they would have been lifted from their knees, while a look of horror would have passed over his face to think they should have worshipped him. He would have said to them as he said to the young man who came to him, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good save one, that is God." So this adherence to the theological Christ rather than to the historical Jesus brings us into collision with those who hold that view. If you will run over the pages of an Evangelical hymn-book, the hymn-book used in the churches that are really consistent, you will find that a large proportion of the hymns are addressed to Christ as prayers, or adoration, or tributes of praise. But there is not one of them that any early disciple could have sung. There is not one of them that the Master would have approved. They are an affront to the truth for which he stood, namely, the adoration of the only God, whose revealer

he was, whose interpreter he was, whose expression in terms of human life we thoroughly believe him to be. But we must find out what he is, even though it brings us into collision with these sincere people who hold to the essential Deity of Jesus of Nazareth in more or less defined terms. And this collision is real. It is a point where we cannot give up, by so much as the slightest concession, our profound belief in the simple humanity of Jesus; and the reasons are very simple.

In the first place we have to take the Scriptures which record his life as we find them. There is not any reference to him except as human in any epistle of Paul, who seems not even to have known—at least not to have remembered to state—any story of his unusual birth; who, it would have seemed, must have mentioned Mary in writing to the churches that he sought to establish in the faith of Christ, if Mary was mother of the Lord, not only, but "mother of God" as well. In the Gospels there is no reference, except in the isolated passages in the first part of Matthew and the first part of Luke to Jesus as other than human. Mark's, which is the oldest, as we have the Gospels, begins with the baptism by John the Baptist,

and ends with the burial of Christ. These two passages alone, in the prefaces to Matthew's and Luke's Gospels, of the whole mass of the New Testament, are the insufficient supports of a doctrine that has spread until it is like an inverted pyramid, standing upon these two points as the apex, and spreading its great base in the air. We cannot accept the view that Jesus was other than simply and purely human, for we think we know what he was. We ask others not to accept our statement, however, but to work their way back through the accumulated débris which has been deposited generation after generation upon the plains of thought; until, working their way back, or, to change the figure, cutting their way through the tangled thicket of opinion, by any process known to them, with the sharp cleavage of their logic, or with the disengaging power of their affection and sincere devotion, —so finding their way back by any method, they discover that one statement after another, as to how he was God, disappears, disappears, disappears, until they stand face to face with the disciples who dared rebuke him when they thought he was wrong, and dared lie upon his bosom when they thought that he was in trouble; who tried to comfort him as one human soul

would comfort another: such a review of the evidence finds only these two isolated texts as ground for a faith that characterises the whole thinking of the Evangelical churches. And why? Because, having accepted the total depravity of man, they could not think of Jesus as really human. His character was too beautiful to allow that; the majesty of his life forbade those to think meanly of him as human,—who thought meanly of man because he was human. They accept the total depravity of human nature and the story of the Fall of man, to which Jesus never refers in any record that is left to us; it appears nowhere in any gospel in his words, — indeed, every utterance of his seems to be a denial of the total depravity of man or the Fall of man from original purity;—having accepted the total depravity of man and its necessary corollary, the Fall of man in the beginning of the race, they needed the intervention of a Saviour to work out an atonement, not between them and sin, but between them and God. And so we insist it is the depth, the unconscious depth of profanity, the absolutely blasphemous attitude toward the great God, that our Father should be thought to be one who needs an atonement to reconcile himself to His children, whom He has

made, and in whose care they have always been. We must differ with these, because we think we know what would have been the attitude of Jesus toward the Father.

In order to believe in Christ, not only must we realise what he was, but we must accept his leadership. The attitude of the great body of orthodox Christians who maintain the Deity of Christ as against ourselves believing in his perfect humanity, and who charge us with not believing in Christ, may be expressed as devotion to a formula without any correspondent devotion to the destiny to which that formula should lead them in their thinking. It is amazing how many things are said that are not meant. Often a very good man on his knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, uses a phrase because it is in a prayer-book, that his soul protests against, that his mind denies, because, as he says, he "uses it waiting for something better to come along." Now the only way to get anything better, if you have what is not good, is to go and get it yourself. The man who, like Micawber, waits "for something to turn up," is far below the man who goes and "turns it up." The orthodox position, therefore, upon this point, is that they do not accept the leadership of

Jesus really. Now I do not say that these people are not good people. When we say that they do not logically accept the leadership of Jesus, we do not mean that. They might have been absolutely good people, though they had never heard of Jesus. There are four and a half millions of good Buddhists who do not accept the leadership of Christ. I do not mean to asperse the characters of these people or their sincerity. I mean to say the habit of accepting opinions ready made makes against the power of using one's own reason. It is the assignment of your own intellect to the keeping of somebody else. In the Protestant, as in the Catholic, it is the same thing: The priest knows a thing; I know the priest; therefore I know the thing the priest knows. Now that is not a syllogism. Those three conditions do not hang together. You can only know that which you have yourself discovered or had revealed to you in terms your consciousness approves, or that you have experienced in the contact with human life. Those are the only three ways of knowing anything. You must have known it by your experience, or must have accepted it in your consciousness, or must have discovered and verified it for yourself. That is

not the attitude of those who hold to the leadership of Jesus as a formula.

Now what is leadership in this sense? It means we must adjust ourselves to the life of Christ so as to get his view of God. That is the first thing. If nothing in your religious experience were gained except a view of God, that would in itself be sufficient for the formation of character and the direction of life; and the use of Jesus, as we apprehend him, is to be a revealer of God to us in terms of human life. I do not want God revealed to me in terms of angelic life. I do not want Him revealed to me in terms of brute life. If the brute has any consciousness of the Ultimate Cause, to the bull God is a bull; to the lion God is a lion; to the eagle God is an eagle. But I am a man and I want to know what God is like in terms of human life. I can only know that by finding some life that is stirred with the sense of God; so "brought into moral coalescence, the human with the divine," in its relation to God, that it becomes to me the lens through which I look, by which the whole atmosphere is cleared and the stars are brought near, as the sidereal universe through the telescope becomes as though it were near and familiar. That Jesus of Naza-

reth does for the believer who accepts his humanity. We try to get his view of God, which is a great deal better than getting a view of him and stopping there. That is what most people do. They come up to Christ, look in his face, picture his beauty to their imagination, idealise him to their sentiment, worship before him, and forget utterly that he said, "I am the Way." But a way points some-whither; it leads somewhere; "I am the Truth." The truth is the expression of an ultimate reality; "I am the Life," said he. Life was not self-existent in him. He was born into the world as we are born into the world. But, "I am the Life," proceeding from the Final Life of all. "No man," said he "cometh unto the Father but by me." His whole teaching in that, as in every other case, is that he is a means to an end, that end, the Father; an approximate to an ultimate, that ultimate the Father. Our effort is to climb where he stands and see what he sees; that is believing in him. No mountain climber ever yet climbed the Alps to any accessible height, where the guide had not gone before, or did not know the way; and when he climbed, tied to his guide, the same rope around his waist and around the guide's waist;—and

when he reached the beetling cliffs to which he had climbed, and stood, perhaps, on top of the Matterhorn, or some great peak of Switzerland, he drew in his delight in panting, short breaths; *but he did not stand looking at the guide.* He *gloried* in the guide's strength; he rejoiced in the guide's skill; he had followed in the guide's footsteps; but he tried to see what the guide saw. That is our attitude; that is belief in Christ,—to get his view of God, and of life, and of human destiny. That is what we mean by saying that our business is "to discover the secret of Jesus." It is better than mere imitation, which is mechanical. It is trying to live the life he lived, in the terms of your life, which is a great deal better than living his life over again. At school you were told to write the thing you knew; to make your composition out of something that you really understood; to say the thing that was in your mind. How unsatisfactory it would have been, and how deadening to all your future knowledge of English literature or interest in English, if you had simply carried into the class-room time after time something you had copied out of some master of English style! You would have imitated the style but lost the power to

think in English. Our attitude is to find "the secret of Jesus," and to live his life over again in terms of our own life.

Most of all, I think this criticism that we do not believe in Christ is offered to us because of our refusal, as I have already said, of any theory of the atonement. But I assure you that there is no theory now accepted as applying to the atonement which existed for the first nine hundred years of the Christian Church. The people in the pews are not expected to be experts in Church history; but no minister in our faith can afford not to be. It is safe to say that any well-equipped Unitarian minister has to know the first three centuries better than the last three, if he is going to vindicate what he thinks about the early Church; and I say with perfect frankness, and ask you to verify it, that no "mercantile" theory, nor "moral influence" theory, nor any one of the remaining twenty or more theories of the atonement as known in the early Church until after the ninth century. The theory of the early Church after the second century and until the time of Anselm and Abelard, with their contending theories, was that this earth had fallen into the hands of a malign power

called Lucifer, Satan, the devil, the adversary,—that he was "the prince of this world"; that there must be some provision made for getting it away from him; God had lost control of part of His estate; part of it had been "sold for taxes," as we would say, and had passed into the possession of another being called the devil. And Christ, in the councils of heaven, after the manner of the old Roman Horatii, stepped forward, or as David before Goliath, and offered to do battle for man and overthrow the enemy; and Jesus being put to death, the bodily nature of Christ perished; but that was only the vindication of his power as divine. In other words, as one of the old preachers of that time said: "God angled for the devil with the bait of Christ, and the devil did not know it had a hook in it." The hook was the Deity of Christ. It impaled the jaws of him who had overthrown the humanity of Christ. There is no human being in the world now who believes that, and yet for eight hundred years the Christian Church as a whole believed some such theory. Then came the theories of Anselm and Abelard, followed by one theory after another, until Horace Bushnell in the middle of the last century taught the "moral

influence" theory; that is, that the sinner comes to Christ, for whose sake Christ dies, and the sinner is broken-hearted by the sight of what sin has cost, and turns to God because sin is overthrown by the vision of the suffering Messiah. Then they said, who believed the other views, that Horace Bushnell did not believe in Christ. That is an easy charge; and is as irrelevant as it is slanderous. The view held by Bushnell is now held by thousands who call themselves orthodox—and entertain toward those who differ with them the same critical attitude from which Bushnell suffered.

Finally, we try to think what Jesus of Nazareth would like us to do. We do not simply ask what would he like us to be. I think what he would like us to be is to be our best selves, enlightened by his example, inspired by his spirit. He would like us to be our best selves; but what would he like us to do? When the Unitarian leaders of the last century answered that question, Dorothea Dix liberated the insane from their chains, and turned the madhouse from a place of torture into a place of healing. When Abraham Lincoln and Charles Sumner and William Lloyd Garrison, and the others

of our faith in the anti-slavery contest, together with the good Quaker Whittier, who himself was a believer in the humanity of Jesus, asked what Christ would have them to do about the slave, they contended for his freedom even to intemperance of utterance and action. John Brown's ill-considered raid was the very expression of what he thought Christ would have him to do. The Abolition Party of the North all asked just one question, "What would Jesus of Nazareth have me do?" And four to six millions of people were freed, because the nation arose and answered that question. There were very good people on the other side of the question. They said: "What does the Old Testament teach about slavery? Did not Abraham have slaves? Did not David, who was 'after God's own heart,' have slaves? Did not the whole of the Old Testament recognise slavery?" They refused to add concubinage and polygamy and gambling and all the other evils that were practised in the twilight times of the Old Testament. They forgot to ask whether it was "a square deal," as we would say now, between Esau and Jacob as to the birthright. They only said, "What did the Old Testament allow as to slavery?" It was a very different

question from asking, "What would Jesus have me to do about slavery?" So this country has been made over by people who have asked themselves that question; and in the answering of the race-question, the leaders have been Unitarians. I offer you this as my challenge,—to say whether the great proportion of those who have been moved by that motive, and regulated in the method of their thinking by that motive, were not believers in Christ. The race-question which now convulses the South would be settled if the faith of the Unitarian Churches prevailed there.

I desire in one single word to say that to believe in Christ is to repeat his life, not in words, but to repeat his life in terms of life. There is many a thing that he said that you have to take with a difference. As Lecky shows in *The Map of Life*, you cannot put up over any savings-bank the injunction, "Take no thought for the morrow." You cannot bring into any court of justice the statement, "If a man take thy coat, give him thy cloak also." All these, that are the natural utterances of his time, have to be adjusted to the really higher ethics of this time. Believing in Christ is repeating his life in

terms of our life; to indulge in a heresy hunt because somebody does not believe in Christ, illustrates what was said in a recent theological controversy, "It was like a battle of two dogs in a flower-garden, that settled nothing but the flowers." That is what always happens. The beautiful things perish in the time of controversy; and there is nothing so true as to the charge that we do not believe in Christ, when it is followed up by the asperity on either side which that charge provokes, as the complaint that "he is wounded in the house of his friends."

The following poem by Arthur Munby has come under my notice in the *Spectator* as I close this chapter; and it so well phrases what I have been claiming for faith in Christ that I add its strong appeal to my own plea.

CHRISTUS CUNCTATOR

So far beyond the things of Space—
  So high above the things of Time—
And yet, how human is thy face,
  How near, how neighbourly, thy clime!

Thou wast not born to fill our skies
  With lustre from some alien zone:
Thy light, thy love, thy sympathies,
  Thy very essence, are our own.

Thy mission, thy supreme estate,
  Thy life among the pious poor,
Thy lofty language to the great;
  Thy touch, so tender and so sure;

Thine eyes, whose looks are with us yet;
  Thy voice, whose echoes do not die;
Thy words, which none who hear forget,
  So piercing are they and so nigh;

Thy balanced nature, always true
  And always dauntless and serene,
Which did the deeds none else could do,
  And saw the sights none else had seen,

And ruled itself from first to last
  Without an effort or a pause,
By no traditions of the Past—
  By nothing, save its own pure laws;

All this, and thousand traits beside,
  Unseen till these at least are known,
May serve to witness far and wide
  That thou art he, and thou alone.

But oh, how high thy spirit soars
  Above the men who tell thy tale!
They labour with their awkward oars
  And try to show thee—and they fail.

They saw thee; yet they fail like us
  Who also strive to limn thee out,
And say that thou art thus or thus,
  And carve our crumbling creeds with Doubt;

Or build them up with such a Faith
  And such a narrow, niggard Love
As clings to what some other saith,
  Or moves not, lest some other move.

Ah, none shall see thee as thou art,
  Or know thee for himself at all,
Until he has thee in his heart,
  And heeds thy whisper or thy call,

And feels that in thy sovran will
  Eternal manhood grows not old,
But keeps its prime, that all may fill
  Thy large, illimitable fold.

CHAPTER VII

"A COLD AND INTELLECTUAL RELIGION"

I SUPPOSE there is nothing about which people so differ as the weather. Some people like a dull day, because they enjoy their own melancholy; and others almost dread a radiant day because it makes them restless and long for the woods and "God's good outdoors"; and between these how great a multitude of those who, when they wish to know whether it is cold, consult the thermometer, and whether it will rain, inspect the barometer. In the same room it often happens that one will say, "It seems to me dry and hot, so that I can scarcely breathe"; whilst the person addressed will say, "I have a constant feeling of cold at the back of my arms, —a little shiver somewhere about the spine." I use this parable of the weather to point the fact, that when, in the contemplation of religion, a critic says it is cold, the simplest answer is,

that all questions of cold and heat are referable always to the temperature of the complainant. It is cold to him who is cold, and it is warm to him who is warm; and there is no settling the fact by the barometer or thermometer or any scientific registry of facts; there is no settling the question of comfort except by the circulation of the comfortable.

Now, we Unitarians are quite comfortable. We are called complacent, self-satisfied. Let us thank God there is a complacency possible in God's good world, which God has so divinely ordered and so supremely and infinitely administers. It would be unwholesome if human beings in God's world were so sin-ridden or sorrow-laden that they could never be quiet in spirit, nor complacent; but to be self-satisfied is quite another matter; and no human being can tell that another human being is self-satisfied without being that very self, because quiet of the external manner may very well be a mask to hide inward convulsion. We wear our masks not only for protection but for decency's sake; and it is well that the world shall get the idea in good company that people are satisfied enough not to make others dissatisfied. A Japanese, who is the very perfection of good-breeding, will smile while he tells you of the

death of someone near to him,—not because death is not the same thing in Japan where people love as in America where people love, but because the idea has been ingrained through generations that it is the business of life to make life easy for the other, and that we have no right to load our burdens, even for our own relief, on other souls. It is the high prerogative of souls to take burdens from others, but it is not ours to give them. So that in the last analysis we say that the question of whether it is cold or not is a question of the temperature of the complainant, and there is no way of making the constantly chilly soul warm by any external pressure or kindling from the outside.

My answer to those who are critics of our faith, who say it is a cold religion, is that *you must carry your own coals.* If I am going into an arctic region I will see to it that provision is made for fuel which is heat producing. I venture into the arctic cold, but I would not venture unprovided. So that to anyone who says an Unitarian Church is a cold place—the simple answer is that it is cold to you. Those who are accustomed to the atmosphere need no artificial protection; their circulation—the intensity of their own feeling—warms them;

and you must bring your own coals if you would come.

Take a step farther. To the complaint that it is a cold and an intellectual religion let me answer that the emotions are not the test of reality. We do reach God by the affections and not by the intellect: there is no question but that the path to the Infinite is through the affections and not through any speculative faculty whatever; but the affections are not the emotions. The emotions bloom upon the root and stalk of the affections; but it is not the flower that is the thing; it is the bloom of the thing itself that is the emotion; and affection is not judged by its flowering; it is judged by its constancy and the power of self-sacrifice that is in it; and to the gay and jocund nature it may be quite possible that there is no depth and power of loyalty whatever. It does not follow that this is so; but it may be so. That for which men go to the stake,—whether it be the quick incineration of some martyr fire, or the slow burning away of life under some perpetual sorrow for love's sake,—that which takes them to such martyrdom, is no mere quick and sudden overflow of emotion, but the alliance of the soul unto reality, for which it must die, whether by slow torture or quick fire; whether

in the tragedy that has no record, or in the martyrdom that writes the page of history; it is the consciousness of alliance with the real and eternal, and this cannot be made dependent upon any day's emotion.

I do not decry emotion in religion. If it were not for emotion we would have few prayers and no hymns. All hymns are born of spiritual emotion, and prayers are wafted upon the aspiration of the soul's outbreathing. Its inspiration comes to it and it breathes again unto high Heaven the thing which has been inspired in it. But when all has been said and done, in religion as in life it is reality that counts; it is constancy that is dependable; it is the marriage of the soul to an abiding principle that remains. We reach God by the affections: it is not possible that any religion could be purely intellectual.

Now if you will recall for one moment the reaction of the Protestant Reformation you will realise that it was a reaction violent in feeling and in method; its reverberation has been in the Dissenting churches ever since; it has set a kind of tone; it has been a drum-beat, a rally, a bugle-call, a championship to enter the lists against the foe. But it has no more value as the expression of fact than the

great musical history of the Roman Catholic Church. The music is built upon the æstheticism of human life, and is a legitimate contribution to it. It was born of it, bred in it, returned to it as a contribution to the æsthetic in human life; and the Protestant revival, whether in the Church of England, in the German Reformation, or in the sturdy contribution of Methodism in the eighteenth century in England,—when it in turn floated upon the tides of emotion a higher life than that which the English Church knew,—no matter from what source it comes, nor to what end it moves, it is, so far as its emotion is concerned, but an incident; it is not the very thing itself.

In the last and final statement, Religion has this for its guarantee, in the words of Martineau, that "for all time the difference must be infinite between the partisan of beliefs and the man whose heart is set upon reality." In the man whose heart is set upon reality you have the registry of fewer emotions, but when all the effervescence has subsided, when all the quick breath of adulation and praise and adoration has gone by, he shall be found abiding, as one who has found "the shadow of a great

rock in a weary land"; his "heart is set upon reality."

I come back for a moment to consider the statement that religion cannot be purely intellectual, for the reason that it must be thoroughly rational. Now, rationalism in religion, which so many people dread, includes the speculative faculty, which is the instrument of inquiry; includes the faculty of the critic which is the discriminating faculty; includes great affection, which is the conserving faculty. To be wholly rational a man must be clear; but to say that religion is purely intellectual—meaning that it dwells in the upper chambers and clear air of speculative beliefs—is not to state what can be true of religion as a whole. If that objection were well taken, it would be our condemnation. We do claim that reason is the great final appeal; but by reason we mean the whole man. He is a rational being who "looks before and after"; whose "roots are in the soil and whose head is in the sun"; who has reasons for his action, motives for his behaviour; whose affections are the root of his principles and whose principles are the regulation of his affections, the one the sanctification of the other. Religion has to do with the whole man; and

religion must be rational or else it is superstition; and so far as it lacks rationality it partakes of the superstitious.

We are set against all superstition. But we examine the myth and miracle as we examine the fact; for the myth is as legitimate,—a flower growing upon a fruitful stem, and the miracle as legitimate,—a fruit growing in a credulous age,—as any fact that history reveals; and the myth and the miracle are part of the poetry of religion; for there is a poetic interpretation of religion which is as legitimate as its facts.

Religion is not a matter of statistics. You cannot sum up its effects by the number of "souls saved." That is a curious phrase in the Book of Acts, which records that in one day three thousand, and on another day five thousand, proclaimed themselves disciples of Jesus; the record reads, "And the Lord added to the Church daily those who *should be saved.*" It is a question of character, fitness, and adjustment, "who *should be* saved"; the potential mood coming in there is the interpretation of the idea. So that when we contemplate a revival of religion we never fail to welcome it, but when it is over we wonder what will be left.

Horace Bushnell pointed out to the Congregationalism of his day, that "Christian nurture" is the prime consideration in the Christian life. It is one thing to be born into the world, and it is another thing to be well nursed to self-supporting life. I should say, that however many souls may be borne into the Kingdom of God upon some tide of emotion, you can only know what has lasted, remained, by the achievements of those who have constantly, steadily, loyally worked to bring in the Kingdom of God in their turn. Many a revival of religion has left the shoreline strewed with the exhausted souls of people whose whole psychical nature has been involved in some tempest of emotion; it may be magnetism, or some mere phase of the multiform psychic development of which we know so little; but it can be as surely produced by artificial means as it can be perceived when it is natural. This tide of emotional and psychic sentiment is not to be deplored any more than it is to be sought. He who seeks it is to be deplored; but he who deplores it knows not all of the human soul.

But religion in its last analysis must be rational; that is, it must be made up of these constituents: there must be an awakened

soul to which it comes; it must be an alert spiritual nature which participates in it, and that spiritual nature must involve the whole man from top to toe, — from the highlands of his nature down to the very basilar instincts; the whole man is involved. It is not given to us simply to feel deeply, but to think clearly on the thought side of religion. It has been well said by one of our thoughtful people: "There are certain natures upon whom the destiny has fallen of deep feeling and high thinking; and there is no rescue for them but in deeper feeling and in higher thinking." Many elements are involved in religion: a basis of relief, which is intellectual apprehension; a principle of action, which is the motive of conduct; and adjustment of the affections, which is the unfailing source of devotion both toward God and man. To the soul intent upon the religious life there must be a struggle to attain these. There are some, however, who grow weary of the struggle; they fall supine upon some ready-made profession of faith and say that the Unitarian churches are cold and purely intellectual places; they have not proved their criticism true; they have only registered the fact that they are tired because they are not strong,—that is all; and

they belong in some of the hospital sects which take care of tired people who are not very strong. I should say without the slightest hesitancy to such people, "You belong here, and here," and point them, as far as my advice would go, to the place to which they should go.

If a man in any congregation belonging to the Unitarian faith were to fall into that relaxed intellectual state in which he should say to me, "I must have authority, some man's statement for the final fact"; if I were convinced that that claim was grounded in the necessity of his nature, and that there was no resource for him in independent and rational life, I would commend him at once to enroll himself somewhere in the multitude of churches of the Roman Catholic faith, because there, at least, he would get authority that has fifteen hundred years back of it,—not always preserving the continuity of history, not always adorned by beauty of life, but sometimes sanctified and purified by the most celestial experience the world has ever known; but it is the radical distinction between such a Church and the Unitarian faith that the one is based upon authority, and the other stands unabashed before the tribunal of reason. There are people who must be

Roman Catholics by the structure of their very spines,—they must be adherents of the Roman Catholic Church; they do not *stand for* anything — they *adhere to* something; just as there are people who must be Quakers, to whom all symbolism is an horror; to whom all ritual is an offence; for whom "the inner light" alone shines; and its radiance from that central place of power of the human soul shines daily upon every act of life; they must belong to the Society of Friends. And if some young girl or lad should say of the Society of Friends that it was cold or formal in its beliefs, that they must go to some embroidered ritual, to some modern phantasm of religion,— they must believe in some painted hell of which they might be afraid, some mythical heaven before which they might prostrate themselves in imaginative delight,— saying this they simply show that the faith of their fathers and mothers has not yet been awakened by spiritual experience in their lives; and they are like the people who would say, on the one hand, "We must be clothed" (yes, for warmth and decency), and, on the other, "What is the latest fashion in clothes?" (That has nothing to do with warmth and decency). Such claims in the name of religion

are on the mere fringe of the mind; it is not even an emotion; it is the slight scum that rises upon the pool of thought, and may be skimmed off, and may every season form again according to the fashion of the time. That is neither thought nor feeling; that is simply vapid and inane trifling with Eternal Verities.

Let me call attention to a consideration that must never be lost sight of. What is the object of religion? I have no hesitancy in saying that it is the formation of character. If it does that, it is good so far as that is done. If it does anything else, not doing that, it is evil. If the Roman Catholic faith saps the foundations of reason it is so far evil; for it produces the saintly character in perhaps the most useless form of life that the world has ever undertaken to follow,—the monk, who sits in his monastery, and the nun who fades out in her cloister. Still, the Catholic faith produces often the sublimest type of spiritual devotion,—the sublimated character. If the Protestant Episcopal Church, for instance (since I must be specific in these illustrations), gathers to itself for prayer by quotation those who can never pray for themselves, the people who like to have their

religious services mapped out for them,—there is nothing to say but that they are that kind of people; but the test still remains, — does character result? Many a time, yes; because many a diffident soul in this world, meaning some time to go upon some errand of love, to find his mate, has been encouraged by reading the love-passages of other biographers, and has learned the habit of the lover's mind from the printed page, regulating his instincts and adjusting his emotions by what has been proved lovable and adorable. It is true, but it is remote: it seems rather a playing at love; a childish make-believe which the grand passion of life shall sweep away when it floods the soul.

I do not wish to say one word depreciatory of any faith that *makes character*. I do not care how it is made, of what stuff it is made, how long it takes, what sorrows it involves, what joys it insures, what high-hearted hope it engenders, what great, black despair the soul passes through in the process, if in the end character be formed, of which the tests are three: First, how does a man feel when he is living with himself? Second, how does anybody feel who is living with him? Third, what place does he take in the social order,

and how bear his share of the social responsibility? The religion which does that well, and in the ratio in which it does it, is the religion for that man, whatever it may be for the next; for all forms of faith are

> ". . . but broken lights of Thee,
> And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

A single suggestion. Much of the warmth of the so-called emotion of religion is impossible to us, and ought to be impossible in this age to anybody. For instance, there is no human being called by our name who has the slightest interest in that form of theologic presentment which belonged to the chromo period of ecclesiastical art, which depicts an uninteresting Heaven largely derived from Milton's *Paradise Lost.* The Book of Revelation also is so often quoted for proof-texts, that it seems well to say it does not refer to Heaven, from the first to the last. It is the story of the New Jerusalem on earth, the vision of the regeneration of human society. But the Divines, so-called, who live their little lives tied to their body of divinity, after the manner of Paul when he cried, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—for a "body of divinity" is always a corpse,—

these Divines have pictured Heaven to make men want to go there; but they have never made them in any haste to die. They may also picture Hell to make sinners want to stay away, and it is an interesting experiment in the ghost-lore and spook-lore of primitive faiths, but it has nothing to do with religion.

If a human being goes to an incurable hell there is no God; an incurable hell and a loving God cannot be in the universe at the same time. You cannot have an incurable hell and an unexhausted compassion at the same time; with all such aspects of doctrine we have nothing to do. We cannot make people feel, if that makes them feel. They are in the condition of those who cannot sit down and read a drama and see it enacted in the mind; they must have melodrama on the stage,—the "barn-storming" type of acting, and all the other exciting conditions of a half-developed art. That is their situation, and they must get it where they can. We cannot furnish it, thank God! If that constitutes the chill, then it is the chill of early spring, in which all the buds are swelling in spite of the chill of the atmosphere, because the sap is running up and the vital forces of the world are reviving and calling the

summer to banish laggard winter from the world. The man who feels this chill must go back into his shell until he has been furnished the temperature which his thin blood invites.

For the most of us God's outdoors in the open weather is good enough, and we need neither heaven nor hell of the old proportions, nor yet a God of the old revolting type, "*to make us feel.*" The eternal compassion, the unfailing goodness of God is not enthroned now remotely and alien from man; it is simply in the world to rational faith; kindled in all its emotions by unfailing affection, He is enthroned in every worshipping heart; so that a new Deity needs a new worship, so much larger is the fact of God; and prayer must take on an adoration which the old type of supplication would not allow; and praise must sound in terms so great that its old feebleness shall seem like the plaintive echo of spirits in prison longing for the light of the outer world. "Great hopes are for great souls!"

CHAPTER VIII

"A DIFFICULT RELIGION"

WHAT people mean by a form of faith being "difficult" may be of two kinds; either they may mean that it is difficult to understand, or they may mean that it is difficult to carry out in practical living. These are the only difficulties that confront people in the consideration of a religious faith: either their minds do not grasp it easily, or their lives do not adjust themselves to it readily.

Now, what do we mean by a statement of religion being difficult to understand? We mean that its definitions are hard to come at. That is the only thing there is to understand in religion; all the rest is experience. For instance, when one declares that he misses an elaborated theological statement in Unitarianism, we answer: That is our boast, that we do not make an elaborated theological statement. For if you will analyse any of

the histories of dogma running through the Christian centuries, you will discover that they are taken up, for the most part, with what no human being ever could know; that is, they are discussing questions that are not only impossible of determination, but they are impossible of adjustment to practical living. How can any human being know whether God is one, or three, or a million? "No man hath seen God at any time." If I am asked if the unity of God is theologically true, I say, I do not know whether it is theologically true. I only know that it is philosophically necessary, because you cannot get on in the study of a universe that has no centre. You cannot get on in the study of forces that are modes of manifestation of one energy if you are not sure that the energy is one. You are immediately caught in the snare and stumble on the difficulties of contradictory first causes. The very phrase is contradictory; there cannot be two first causes. I am not concerned as to whether the unity of God is theologically true; I am only concerned with the question whether it is philosophically necessary in order to my thinking, and whether it focuses the mind best, and brings the

human energies to their acts of devotion and acts of service with least distraction. People who want a theory of the Trinity go browsing back through the various pasture-lands of theological outcropping, and gather here a form of tritheism, and there a modal form of manifestation; and when they are through it is something no human being can know. So with regard to the question of the deity of Jesus of Nazareth. People say, "It is so easy to believe that he was God." And no one of them can tell what God is like. They really mean what Starr King—our splendid Starr King—said when he declared, "O God, Thou art an infinite Christ." In other words, he meant what they mean, that the divine quality that is in Jesus of Nazareth, his perfect manhood and humanity, are in such terms of sublimity and grandeur and purity, that if we could have them infinitely extended, we would have a Being whom we could worship, and it would be God. That is what they mean when they say, "It is so easy to believe that Jesus is God." In saying this their logic breaks down, but their impulse is just right. So, if a man should come to me and say, as men have said, "What would you do with me in the

Unitarian Church if I came in and said that Jesus is God?" I would say to him at once: "I would not quarrel with you at all. I would infinitely rather have you say that he is God than that he is 'mere man.'" That is the most disagreeable phrase in the language to a Unitarian ear,—"mere man." For no human being knows what "mere man" is, any more than, as someone has said, he knows what "mere Alps" or "mere solar system" is. We do not use diminutive terms when we speak of the finest things human nature has ever seen. If a man says, "Jesus was God," he would be mistaken in the fact, but if he said, "Jesus was mere man," that would be a mistake in his morale. In one instance he would be exalting the human beyond its proportions; in the other instance he would be degrading it below his respect. The first is an intellectual misapprehension; the second is a moral error. So when we make a distinction between deity and divinity, we are encountered by people who say: "It is extremely hard to understand. What is the difference between deity and divinity? You say 'Jesus is divine; all humanity is divine.' What do you mean?" I mean that it has in it the stuff that God can show Himself in.

That is to be divine. But there is but "one God, the Father, whose we are, and whom we serve." We are all stuff that He can make Himself manifest in. Suppose you have a sculptor with every ideal of art in his mind, with all the beautiful visions of his mind, seeking expression in some material that is fit. Phidias could not have made his figure for the Acropolis out of sponge. He needed gold and ivory. He needed workable material that was susceptible of fine finish. He needed the gold's lustre and the ivory's shine, and the pliability of each to the graver's tool. If he had taken sponge or cork, or some porous substance, he might have had an idea like God, but when he got through he would have had a thing like a sponge. That is what we mean by the divine quality in human nature, and in Jesus, its best representative; and the only reason that people find it difficult to understand is that their minds are sophisticated by theological preconceptions; and there is a law in physics that you cannot put two things in the same place at the same time. If the mind is filled up with theological junk, the only thing to do in order to find Unitarianism easy, is to clear out the old stock and start in business from the basis of something

that the world wants. So, in all the history of dogma, people miss the things they have somehow or other attached to religion. I remember distinctly the first day on which, when I was twenty years of age, there came to me the conception that religion was something that could be stated in terms of soul, and was not necessarily stated in terms of theological definition; and I gathered that from the earliest book of Dr. Martineau, *Endeavors after the Christian Life.* I remember standing up in the middle of my room, a young Methodist preacher in the country, in Maryland, and opening that book, and saying: "Here is a discovery. Here is a man who tells about religion in terms of soul. If he is dealing with Christ, it is not in terms of an atonement. If he is dealing with God, it is not in terms of a Trinity. If he is dealing with the future life, it is not in terms of heaven and hell. It is all in terms of soul." To anybody who has had the other training, that comes with a shock and surprise. The student who has been taken out of the secularism of his life and put under the training of academic professors in a theological seminary gets caught in the mesh of the net, so that he does not swim clear for quite a while,

no matter how deep the sea is, nor how pellucid the waves. So they say Unitarianism is difficult, because of the trailing remainder of theory in which they tangle their feet when they are trying to be free.

Now when we come to the second form of difficulty—not the difficulty of understanding, for our scheme of life, our method of looking at things is perfectly simple—but when we come to the other, the task of adjusting life to it, there is a real difficulty. I have no interest in easy religion. Easy thinking is apt to be foolish thinking. Easy ethics is either morals turned loose, not girded as to the loin, not tightened as to the purpose; or else it is small moralities; and there is a great mass of people in the congregations of the Christian churches who are best satisfied when there are being peddled out to them small moralities,—a kind of retail business in "fancy notions" in religion. They are perfectly satisfied under those conditions. Now I have not the slightest interest in that. The religious life should be difficult in its thinking, difficult in its purpose, difficult in its struggle, to the point where it is victorious, in some phase of experience, and from that time on that phase of it, at least, becomes easy. Why should the apprentice make infinite blunders

in his craft? Why should the artist struggle through years of preparation? Why should the medical student find the utmost difficulty in getting anybody to let him experiment upon him? Why should any of the crafts and skills of life come only by infinite struggle, outlay of effort, mind, and exertion the most strenuous and insistent, and the religious life, which is the science of manhood, the religious life, which is the splendid achievement of the human soul,—the making of a human soul, which is the only business you have in hand,—why should that come easily to people who six days out of the week are plunged in a bog of daily duties, and come out on Sunday to sun themselves for an hour? The fact is, the religious life ought to be difficult, if it is worth while. I do not mean to say it is difficult because it is unnatural, abnormal, or supernatural. It is the natural that is so difficult. In a group of sycophants it is difficult for a sincere man to speak the truth. In a group of traders, by some occult process of the markets, it is difficult for a man who has something to sell and knows its value, either to set his price or to get it. A man said to me, when I asked him why two immortal souls should be six weeks buying a horse, "If we

came to terms within three days, we should each think the other had cheated him!" It is the natural that is difficult. In a period of court manners, the natural man is called brusque and lacking in the diplomatic address of the court. So with regard to the whole range of life. Our first struggle is to get back to the simplicities of nature. Any woman in the midst of "the season" will tell you that much of her time is given to the study of what is expected of her, to the study of the conventions that cloister her on every side, to the weighing of probabilities as to the effect of this or that method of life, dress, and behaviour. The inanities of this sort that come to a minister's knowledge would make a comic issue of the book of life if it were not for the tragic waste involved. And all for want of simplicity, directness, and naturalness of life. Somebody starts out who is perfectly natural; and he is immediately called Bohemian, irregular, daring. He is living his own life on his own terms. Of course, he must moderate his own terms to conform to the social contract, for he is not living alone, he is living in society. I use this illustration simply to call your attention to the fact that it is not because religion is abnormal, unnatural, supernatural, but

absolutely an expression of nature, that it is difficult to conform to its simplest requirements.

What is involved, then, in the Unitarian faith, as it applies to life?

First, passion for the Truth. There is a very good definition given of the true, the good, and the beautiful, that "The true is what is; the good is what ought to be; and the beautiful is what is as it ought to be." That is a very good definition; and if we will just think for a moment how far we live aside from that requirement, how far we are from demanding what is, —rather asking to hear what we can bear, and to see what we ought to gaze upon, and to walk by paths that are safe, going cannily even then, —when we realise that this is the common demand, then the passion for the truth, as the thing that is, comes before the soul as almost an impossible ideal. And yet in a world of fancies, the only Infallible Pope is the fact. The fact is the only infallible thing in the world; and the search for the thing that is, as to the soul, as to the soul's endeavour, as to the will of God, as to the adjustment of the right relations of life, as to character,—the passion for that marks a demand that is difficult, but is as necessary as it is difficult, if our interest

is in the forming of character, in the living of the higher life. And by the higher life I simply mean human life; by the lower life, brute life. The higher life is the human life: carried to its infinite extension, you get The Christ; carried to its infinite possibilities, you get the humanity of God.

So we are given, not only to the passion for the truth, but to the love of goodness. Often the incisive, the far-down, deep trouble with us is that men do not believe in the triumph of goodness. Men who believe in that would stake everything on it; but you will meet other men at the crossing of the roads of some moral action, and if you could look into their minds, if you could know what they were thinking about, almost unconsciously to themselves, at the cross-roads between right and wrong, where that road leads to death, and this to life,—you would find them standing there wondering if there be not some short road across lots; they spend their energy and power of mind and strength upon a nice balancing of probabilities, as to whether they can sail close to the reefs of wrong-doing and yet escape. They spend upon that question energies of soul and mind that would make saints of them if it were applied to the real development of the spiritual

life. Our real trouble is that we do not believe in goodness. We worship smartness; we worship cleverness; we worship wealth. What a sickening thing it is to have the papers constantly filled with just two items: one, the families that have gone to pieces over night; the other, the fortunes that have been made in the last twenty-four hours! The triumph of goodness is better than the divorce court; and the vindication of goodness is better than the fortune of a millionaire. I do not go so far as the proverb that says, "Better is a dinner of herbs." That might be very well for a man who had everything and could make proverbs for people who had nothing, as Solomon did. But the real necessity is, that the man in the rough and tumble of life—the man who is underneath the crowd that is piled on top of him—if he would save himself alive, must believe in the ultimate triumph of goodness. Failure here is the only infidelity left in the world. A man cannot philosophically say, "There is no God." We have worked out of the materialism in which it was said that man had no soul. That Slough of Despond has been waded, and we are on firm land, philosophically and scientifically. The only real infidelity is that of the man who prefers to get on, no matter how

soon he may have to get off. His ideal of success is accumulation, aggrandisement, position, elevation; when, if for one day he were enamoured of goodness, these things would seem to him so empty that he would feel as if he had been walking in the midst of shadows, and living to no purpose whatever.

Finally, there is the adoration of what ought to be in perfect character. The Unitarian churches are not allowed by their code of what is right to boast of perfection. We know that we are not perfect. But between boasting of "sanctification," "perfection," speaking of the Infinite Being as though He were somebody that lived around the corner, in the most irrelevant and irreverent way, — between that and the struggle to be good, the adoration of character, there is all the stretch of celestial diameters. And the business of religion is the formation of character. The people who find this difficult come to us and say: "When you speak of being saved by character, are you not arrogating to yourselves righteousness?" Our answer is very simple. We do not know of any righteousness except our own. If there be any righteousness that I can have "imputed" to me, it will not be mine, any more than somebody's else

costume would be mine if I appeared in it. If I may have a righteousness that is not mine, there must be some means of communication between my soul and God to make it mine. The fact is, there is only one kind of righteousness that a man can know, — the kind that to him is ideal; he sees it in another and he strives for it himself. That is the whole problem of life. There is no system of atonement; no attributing to me of the virtues of another; no saving of my soul by any process that is outside myself that can possibly be effective. Would you save your soul by some process of theological insurance? If you are saved, your soul will do the saving. In other words, you will come up by soul-force into the life, whatever it is, that belongs to the Great Father—the life that is in reserve for us; you will come up into it as the seed comes up into the summer, because it has the power of fertility and life in itself.

The problem of saving the soul is to have a soul that is worth saving. Now, no man can say that of himself in any arrogant way; but, after all, it is the thing we believe concerning those whom we feel have been brought out of death into life, out of trouble into victory, out of temptation into

achievement: that they were there by virtue of a faculty in them which could not be killed nor set aside. If you are ever saved, your soul will be the instrument of your salvation. No miner ever carries out his work in the vein where he does not expect to find ore. It is the real, essential value of human life that it cannot perish without affecting the life of God.

Unitarianism is an exacting faith. There are apt to be in all our churches people who, because they are affronted by Orthodoxy, think they are Unitarians; because they have found it impossible to believe the old statement, say, "We are Unitarians." The idea is very common that, because you can swear at a thing in which you do not believe, you have sworn to a thing in which you have come to believe. Mere revolt, mere angry denunciation, mere protest, is not religion. It is only a convulsion of the mind. When you get over your convulsion, and conditions of health set in, you are ready to be brought out to a larger and better faith.

We must allow for these people who are clinging to a raft because they have escaped from the wreck—which is a very natural attitude; if the ship has gone to pieces and you

are in the sea, you naturally cling to the thing that is afloat; it may be a bit of timber, or it may be a life-raft; but after we have allowed for this flotsam and jetsam of the theological world, we come to those who are struggling, with devotion to the truth, the adoration of goodness, the endeavour for character that is safe because it is sound. What is the exaction upon them? There are just three particulars. The first is that religion is an experience and not a theory. It is a conscious, deliberate, constant realisation of communion between the soul and God. If that were not known by thousands upon thousands in all the churches, then the Church would have ceased to be effective, and the ministry would have come to be the mere show of a profession. That is the first exaction that Unitarianism lays upon the soul, because it has no artificial helps for the soul. It does not furnish emotional gatherings, in which, by excitation of the emotions, the religious life is made to seem possible for the moment. It does not have an elaborated liturgy with its services. It makes its own service in each instance. If it rises to power and efficiency, that is because the people engaged in it have power. There are few helps in Unitarianism of an external kind.

We do not believe that man is lame, so we do not furnish crutches. We do not believe that man is sick, so we do not prescribe nostrums. We do not believe he is lost, so we do not propose for him salvation from hell. None of the pictorial conditions are with us that are furnished by other churches. We are saved much time and much endeavour, and get down to the central fact in all religion, under all names, namely: Can the soul know God, and does it know when God speaks to it? And that is the thing for which you and I are to struggle from first to last; and if we do not realise it in some sense, we have not touched the border of the religious life.

The second difficulty arises from the fact that we have focused responsibility upon man. We stand by the order of Nature — and Nature does not allow us to put our sins on anybody else. You charge your sickness to the drainage; but you have to take your own medicine— you do not pour it down the drain. You say, "I was hurt by a blunder of the motorman." Very well; but it is not the motorman's legs that are put in splints. The whole system of thought with us is that you have got to focus responsibility well in the foreground of your life. We do our own book-keeping, and

balance our debit and credit as the days go by. The system that relieves man of responsibility, defrauds him of moral power. There is a vulgar proverb in the Old Testament in which Jehovah is represented as saying, "Ye shall no more say, The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. I say unto you that all souls are mine. As the soul of the father, so the soul of the son is mine, and the soul that sinneth it shall die." That is the teaching, not of the Old Testament alone, but of the New. Did Jesus deal gently and suavely with life? No; he dealt with life as a surgeon. He said, "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" He dealt with things as they were, and built from the ground up. The whole business of life is to get your responsibility so near home that you can attend to it.

The Unitarian faith is difficult because it insists that you shall look out for the other man. There is not room in it for selfishness, and a selfish Unitarian is no Unitarian at all. If you are intent on your own condition, your own affairs, you may go somewhere else and attend to them. There is no room for anybody who is self-centered and focused on his own

affairs; there is no room in life, in nature, where everything is related and nothing stands alone,—there is no room for the man who is only taken up with himself. "Thou shalt love the other as thyself," is not new with us. It falls from the lips of Christ, and we believe, as one of the fathers of the Church well said: "Man first; then God." And I doubt whether any human being ever knows God in any saving and powerful way who has not known man in some intimate and sympathetic way.

These are some of the exactions; and when men say that we are difficult, they lose sight of the fact that thousands of people have found it not too difficult to live the sublime and radiant faith that they believe. Indeed, it is true of all life, that the radiance and joy of our inner experience is in the very ratio in which we entertain high ideals. The human soul that in a large, strong, intimate, and real way deals with things as they are, because the soul is struggling toward God, finds its heaven here, and its divine communion lasting.

CHAPTER IX

"PULLING DOWN AND BUILDING UP"

SOMETIMES it is said that Unitarianism is a religion of denial; sometimes that it is a religion of negation; sometimes that it is entirely occupied with the critical faculty. But I have stated the objection in its simplest and most understandable form, namely, the constantly recurring criticism that Unitarianism pulls down but does not build up. There could not be anything more untrue; but that is not an answer; that is a protest. If this criticism were true, then Unitarianism ought to go out of business. If it were only partially true, it would be a serious arraignment of its usefulness. But since it is absolutely untrue to the last degree as touching anything that ought not to be pulled down, my answer may meet, in several particulars, I hope, the criticism that it is a religion that pulls down but does not build up.

What do the critics mean who say this?

They mean that Unitarianism has encouraged free inquiry; and this, to one who wishes to wall himself up in dreams, or immure himself in theories, or hedge himself by traditions, or embark upon a raft that never goes anywhere, but is in perpetual oscillation on the high sea of mind, is a horror and a distress. There are people who are perfectly willing to anchor to a floating bog, and when they think they have made progress, it has only been because their anchorage has shifted; they have not gone anywhere by intention. There are people who are entirely satisfied to regard the anchor as the entire equipment of a ship, making no provision for sails, or steam, or cordage, or even a binnacle-light, to say nothing of chart and helmsman, and all the splendid equipment of the voyage of mind and the adventure of the spirit. These are the people who discount free inquiry. These are the people who have forgotten that it was a Church Father—St. Hilary—who said, "If offence come with the truth, then better the offence than that the truth should be concealed." What this class of critics has forgotten would make a library; and what they have not known would equip a great university with material of literature and knowledge. What shall the human mind—

the thinking machine of the world—do but think, inquire, put a premium upon investigation, lay bare by the scalpel the tissues of the thing inquired into, subject to the close scrutiny of the microscope every great thought nature has to reveal, and point the tube of their far-reaching inquiry by the telescope into the stellar spaces, to find God still at work?

But if anybody is afraid to have his mind act, and does not like to carry his personal sovereignty under the crown of his own hat, and wants to have what the mercantile classes call "ready-to-wear" opinions; why, then, to such people, Unitarianism in the process of free inquiry, seems to be pulling down and not building up. And yet, these very people, if they are devotees of art, would have stood rejoicing when the wall of the church was ripped open that the Venus of the Capitol might be rescued from its immured condition. The monks walled up the chaste figure, because they were afraid of their own emotions; and a later age ripped open the sacred structure that it might recover an ancient work of art; and it did well. But these who, for the sake of æsthetic beauty and the history of art, would have countenanced such a sacrilege as that, when the human mind is intent upon discovering the beauty of life in

terms of power, seek at once an anæsthetic, an opiate, something that will act as a sedative upon inquiry, and they shy at the word "sceptic," forgetting that it was Jesus himself who said to Thomas: "Reach hither thy finger and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." This was what the Master of the art of living said to the sceptic among the disciples.

This criticism that Unitarianism pulls down and does not build up, arises also from the fact that Unitarianism has set personal religion over against authority. There is not a member of the Society of Friends believing in the "inner light" — there is no Methodist intent upon the revival of religion in the terms of the ministry of the Holy Spirit,— there is no lay churchman of the Protestant Episcopal Church, busy with evangelical assertion of the rights of the human soul as against ritual,—there is no Catholic mystic dreaming of communion even upon terms so carnal as those that appear in the words of Mary of the Incarnation, whose "marriage to Christ" affronts our taste,—there is not one of these who believes more profoundly that religion is not a theory, but an experience, than do those

Unitarians that are worth naming in this connection. Religion is not a theory; it is an experience. Its definitions are theoretical; but men do not live in definition. Men fight over definitions; they grow rabid about definitions; they are contentious over definitions; we range all the way from mild protest to violence and bloodshed over definitions. And the only corrective to that insanity is the common experience of divine realities. Men understand one another who speak the language of the spirit, who never could understand each other when speaking the language of speculative theology. Men understand one another who can pray together; just as men with the blazon of the cross before them marched from every part of Europe, speaking every language of the Western world, to rescue the sepulchre of Christ, because they were inflamed by one common purpose that to them was the experience of a great emotion; and they fulfilled the splendid phrase of one of the fathers of the Church, who speaks of "the expulsive power of a great affection."

There is only one kind of way to love purely and strongly in the world. There is any quantity of diversities in the theory of what love is like; how love is provoked; what course love

may take; what are the physiological and psychological elements that enter into affection; how far it is based in brute instinct, and how far it is the result of celestial visitation. All this, that might be extended to a programme of infinite absurdity, has to do with the definition; and the world goes on loving in its old, plain, splendid, regenerative way as the generations go by. Religion is an experience of divine realities. It is not to be had by authority, because no human experience can be transplanted from one human soul to another. It grows in every case from the seed, and the seed is harrowed in by the necessities of the spiritual nature, and free inquiry and personal obligation are necessary to the mellowing of the soul that it may be sowed with the seed of a real experience. Now, if anybody is satisfied with authority, then that is the kind of thing he wants, and he is of no concern to this discussion. If anybody must have authority that runs back at least fifteen hundred years, he should go, as I have said, into the Roman Catholic Church. It is not the genuine thing. It is the first great schism in Christianity, but it has its fifteen hundred years. Let him go there if he must have authority; that is, if anybody is so constructed that he must

have crutches when he is not lame, then the Catholic Church furnishes the most admirable adaptation of fictitious supports for beings that have legs. But that is not a substitute for personal religion. A woman who has been in one of the great churches comes to me and says: "When I came face to face with the death of the person whom I loved best in all the world, I wanted to know for myself what were the issues of life and death." And that, every minister of religion confronts over and over again. For calm weather, when indifference is quite a sufficient equipment for the soul, authority is quite comfortable, just as securities are well placed in some bank of safe deposit; but when you want to use the thing you own as quick assets at a crisis, you must know whether it is negotiable in the market. That is the whole situation. That is the whole question: Whether I can take another man's opinion for a thing that is tearing the soul out of me. Whether I can take another man's discovery for my consolation when I am lost, and whether a chart that was made in the seventeenth century is good sailing directions for a voyage made in the twentieth century. Because Unitarianism has insisted upon personal religion as an experience, it is

said that it pulls down and does not build up.

Another reason that affects the people who are influenced by numbers: There is always a large contingent in the world who never believe that anything is so unless somebody is shouting about it, and unless a great many people are endorsing it. A thing is true in the ratio of its popularity; and Unitarianism has not set itself to make proselytes nor to build churches except as incidental to the great work of building character. So it is asked: "Why is it that you have less than five hundred churches in America?" There is no answer to that, except that building churches would possibly have diverted us from the great task of building a literature, which we have done. Every man of the first rank in the literary group of the last generation, with one or two exceptions, was a member, avowed and devoted, of a Unitarian Church. This is not a boast; it is a fact. They did not apologise for it. Why should I apologise for them? I simply state the fact, that the great names, which I will not take time to rehearse, with the exception of Washington Irving and one other, were Unitarians. They were busy with the production of what has been the companionableness of literature in this country, and which was supposed

to constitute a literature until Mr. Barrett Wendell wrote his book a few months ago.

Unitarians are reproached with not being many. Well, that is not their method. That is not the method of sane government in matters secular. We believe in a democracy; but we commit the administration of it to a few. We believe in the ideal of free trade, but we see to it that protection lasts until free trade is possible. We believe in the absolute right of all men to have whatever they can hold; but, after all, if you should divide all the wealth to-day, in ten years it would be back in the hands of those who could hold it. So that we are not to blame for not multiplying churches. We have been building schools. We have been endowing universities. We have been creating a literature, and we have been trying to build up character. And numbers are not the test of truth in any instance. If that were so, then Christianity must go by the board, for the vast majority of the human race do not profess it. There are four hundred millions of Buddhists who repudiate it with absolute ease and delight; but that does not invalidate its truth to anyone who believes in its efficiency as a rule of life.

These characteristics that I have named:

the right to free inquiry—free inquiry as a duty, personal religion as an experience, and the absence of nervous anxiety to add to the statistics of our ecclesiastical history, make us seem, to those who criticise, people who are not concerned to build up.

What are the facts? The facts are that Unitarianism builds up personal responsibility, while it emphasises personal liberty. Now, there are Unitarians and Unitarians. There are people who have been born into the Unitarian churches, who have never given religion any serious thought since. I do not know what their state is. Their opinions are not worth anything. The fact that they were born under given conditions does not entitle them to be heard. Only the student of a subject is fit to speak upon it. He may be mistaken even then; but at least he has given the matter attention; he has focused his mind upon it. I do not claim that all Unitarians are saints, though I have known a vast number who, tested by character in its robuster elements, were so pre-eminently good, that if they had given me their opinions in a language I could not understand, and when it was interpreted to me would have been found to be a doctrine of which I had never heard, I should still have

been compelled to make the appeal back to the rectitude of their lives and the beauty of their character, and say: "That is the vindication of what I fail to understand in terms of speech." I have been with people of our faith in dying, in disaster, and in prosperity, in their delights of common life and in the sadder experiences of our common history; and I say, not simply as John Wesley did of the early Methodists, "Our people die well," but that these have lived so well I cannot think of them as dead.

In the building up of personal responsibility and personal liberty, we have necessarily pulled down the traditions. There are people for whom the New Testament was bound in heaven and let down to mortals, to put it very plainly; and they require you to believe every line of it or else be charged with destroying it. Now, the business of every devout, inquiring mind is to open it up; and what seems to the worm that has been hatched down at the heart of a rose, when the rose unfolds and the light comes into it, — what seems to the grub a pulling down, because the petals open out to the sun and its poor little squirminess is exposed to the light, to the rose seems the fulfilling of its destiny, and, to

the gardener who discovers the worm, his opportunity. The business of the inquiring mind is to open up the Scripture; and the fact that Unitarianism devoted itself to the Higher Criticism, keeping up with it at every advance, has resulted for us in restoring the New Testament to the use of thinking minds, instead of having it repudiated by those who found parts of it impossible to believe. I will give an illustration: Take the story of Jesus cursing the fig-tree. If that were true, I should have to let the character of Jesus go. Nothing he could do after that would restore it to me. To have cursed the fig-tree and withered it, even if it were given to any being to do that thing, because it had no figs on it when he was hungry, would have forever deposed him from the leadership of men. No creature can claim to lead or save who is kindled to ignoble anger by personal disappointment. I have no trouble in saying it never happened. It is the business of people who think for themselves to say that. When I find in the New Testament that only in the preface to Luke's Gospel and the preface to Matthew's Gospel is the abnormal birth of Jesus of Nazareth referred to,—and that it is not known to Paul, who writes the earliest

documents in the New Testament record,— I am obliged to make a distinction between the divine character and the miraculous birth. When you do that, for these people who say you must take it all or leave it all, though they do not do that with any other literature in the world, though they do not do that with any day's diet at the table, though they do not do that even with the characters of their own friends, — this process of inquiry, of personal responsibility and personal liberty, seems to be pulling down and not building up. I will venture the statement that but for the work which began with Semler in 1790, that has been known during our lifetime as the Higher Criticism of the Scripture, the Bible would have ceased to be read, as a book of impossible miracles and unworkable ethics. It is because students have discriminated between what was the word of God to the human soul in a progressive revelation, and what were the accidents of literature in a moving procession of the centuries, that the Bible is prized to-day as never before by thinking men.

Still further. Unitarianism not only insists upon this personal liberty and constant revelation, so that God speaks now as He always has spoken to the listening mind, but it insists

upon a personal responsibility which requires no atonement outside the soul itself. Now, a shudder passes over the evangelical mind when you say that. They say you have denied the Atonement. You cannot deny a thing that never happened. You can only deny the statement that it did happen. I said in the beginning what I repeat now.—we have never pulled down a single essential element that went to the making of human character, or to the vindication of the truths of history, or to the affirmation of the facts that lie in the Ultimate Reality of things. All that we have insisted is, that you shall not write out a new code with every generation, and declare that unless a man believes that, he is to be consigned to condemnation now and eternally lost. This difficulty is illustrated by what happens in the Church of England. The Athanasian Creed is recited. When they have recited the Athanasian Creed, which belongs to the eighth century, they have consigned themselves to eternal condemnation for having previously recited the Nicene Creed. There they stand—in the same book, recited in the same church, and you have your choice on which terms you will go to hell. We insist that that is inconsistent

with personal responsibility, inconsistent with salvation which is sanative. Salvation is moral health, and you cannot have it proceed outside the individual soul. All the thought of the ages may be spent in providing the instruments of salvation, but only the struggle of soul can make that salvation a personal experience.

Finally. What I have intimated must still further be enforced, namely, that the test of religion is in the character it produces. One of the most entertaining and exasperating things in public discussion is that your antagonist will continually try to run you on a siding; so that when you say that the test of religion is in the character that it produces, the critic immediately responds, "Do you pretend to say that the orthodox faiths do not produce good character?" That is what they say every time, you can count upon it with absolute certainty. No, that is not meant. What I say is this: That the test of a religion is in the character it produces by virtue of that which the soul got out of it; and it is not the test of a religion as to the character it produces by what the soul carefully excludes and forgets that it teaches. That is the situation of our evangelical friends. Mr. Beecher used

to say, twenty years ago and more, that he believed there was a creed in the church safe,—a Confession of Faith,—but, having lost the combination, he preached what he pleased, and people were not interested in distinctions of theology; they believed profoundly what they heard, to the very great benefit of their souls. Now, when a commercial theory of the Atonement, which makes God buy back children He never lost, and puts the sacrifice of their sins upon a being who never committed them, in order that they may escape a hell which He made, and be relieved of the temptations of a demon who could not have grown up with God,—I say, when that theory of the Atonement is proposed to a human mind, under conditions evangelical, and good character comes under those conditions, it comes in spite of a theory which is essentially dishonest, unjust, and which if it occurred in the business walks of life would exclude a man from the world of trade; because it proposes a fictitious condition, to be relieved by a dishonest process. There is nothing sacred about the doctrine of the Atonement, except the sacred emotions which are associated with it. It is only as old as Anselm in the eleventh century. It was utterly unknown during the first years of the

Christian Church. It has no place in the New Testament. But, because somebody insists upon it with determined iteration, it has become as sacred as any other idol that has often enough been shown to the worshippers. Now, I say that anybody who wins good character out of that, wins it in spite of that condition. There are many doctrines that are not germane, that have no influence whatever upon character. I do not understand why a person should not be as devout and godly of character believing in the Trinity—which is a proposition in philosophy, and has nothing to do with religion whatever—as under the conditions that we represent of the unity of God. But they cannot be philosophically clear. They are in some confusion when they pray. For even the most modified theory of the Trinity as a series of manifestations has its difficulties. Those are difficulties of mind, of the speculative faculty, and not difficulties of character. I *insist*, that the test of a religion is to be found in the character it produces *by virtue of what is believed.* The Fatherhood of God, infinitely fatherly; the sense of communion that nothing can interrupt; the experience of heaven here and now; the consciousness of the forgiveness of sins, which has been pro-

vided for between the soul and God, with no mediator between,— these are elements that are easily transmuted into character, for their very essence involves the sense of personal responsibility.

CHAPTER X

WHAT HAS BEEN BUILT UP

Certain things have been built up. In the first place, the faith we contend for has built up the courage of those who hold it. If I were asked to name any one thing that is most saving to human life, I should say courage. A discouraged man puts the enervation of his own nature into his work, he puts the dulness of his own spirit into his work. His eye is dull. The work of God cannot be seen with eyes as dull as those of a stale fish. The eye must be purged of all film, all obscurity, and the heart must be true to every motion of the spirit's intention. The one thing we need in order to get on in life is not simply to make the best terms that we can, but to compel it to the best terms that we need; and the motto that I saw over the door of George MacDonald's house in Old English, "Corage: God mend all!" is the motto of every soul that is imbued with

the faith that we profess. This courage is based first of all on the fact that God is good, and God's world is a good world to be in with God; that there is nothing out of which God can be driven; that I cannot even by my sins escape Him; and the only way I can run to ever outrun my sin or my sorrow is to run to Him. And what the child feels who is lost, and works its way through the labyrinth of streets and finally sees that it is near home, every soul of us feels—that we are not far from God and the home of the soul; that God is "infinitely Fatherly"; that "there is no place where earth's sorrows are more felt than up in Heaven"; that the goodness of God is wide "like the wideness of the sea"; and that therefore, instead of the old, diabolical, immoral, vengeful occupation of a throne outside the universe by a God who watches it go, we have substituted in our thinking the Fatherhood of God, never remote, always, as Jesus said, "seeking those to worship Him who worship Him in spirit and in truth." It is a great thing to dismiss the fear of God in this abject sense from the human soul.

More than this. We have dismissed the fear of the destiny of man, as to the order of man's life. There are two things that disturb

us. The first is, "What am I to do?" The other is, "What is to become of me?" And between those two affrights, all their life long some souls have been held in bondage. What am I to do? How can I work out my career? I often find in the ministry of religion people who are saying, "How am I to get on?" What a useless question for a human soul! There is nothing to be done in this world about getting on, except to be fit to get on. Any human being who knows any one thing well that anybody else wants to know, has an audience and a purpose and an opportunity; and any human being that can do anything well that anybody wants to have done, is sure of occupation. And so we have, as fundamental to our thinking, the idea that every man's life is a plan of God; that it is part of the order of nature, if you please, which is just the same thing as its being the plan of God. For this is not an atheistic world; it is not a world without God; it is not a world in which any part of our work can be done alone. The great purpose of life is to do with contentment whatever the Divine Will appoints. It is of no concern at all what you do; but the manner and style of doing it are of great concern. I am only concerned that it shall

be something that shall be creditable to my Maker. I am more concerned, as every loyal subject of a king must be, that it shall be to the honour of the king than that it shall be felicitous or comfortable or favourable to the subject. The honour of the Maker is in the hands of His creatures; and the dreadful thing about sin is not simply that it is sinful, not at all that it shall be punished,—it ought to be, and no noble man who sins, even by mistake or indirection, would wish to escape his punishment, or have anybody else pay his debt,—the dreadful thing about sin is that a being who was made in the image of God, and into whose keeping God put His work and His will, should be *disloyal*—the worst word in the language. He can never come to the "Land o' the Leal," because he is a traitor to the very conditions of his birth and being. That is the fearful thing about sin, that the thing God made is a standing reproach to his Maker. Destiny is taken out of the realm of fear and put into the keeping of God; and this building up of the courage of life is one of the things we have done for those who accept our faith.

We have done another thing. With no invidious purpose whatever, I must still insist

upon the fact that the other churches have been trying to make a nice adjustment between the things they thought were true and the things that the scientific inquiry of the world has proved to be true. While the churches have been trying to see how little they could allow to the natural world and to scientific and philosophic inquiry, the Unitarian ministry and laity have been united in one single inquiry,—"Is it true?" Proven true, it becomes part of our gospel. Demonstrated true, though it reverse all our opinions, we must accept it, because there cannot be two antagonistic truths in God's world. What is theologically true must be true in the scientific sense as well. There cannot be a true world and a false theology which can be made to agree. We are pledged to the advance of science. We do not say that the doctrine of evolution has been finally proven; but it is to-day the *working hypothesis* of the whole scientific world, and it is our working hypothesis as applied to theology, to the Bible, to human life; that is, we examine a text of Scripture by the scientific method, just as you would examine the specific gravity of a metal, or would apply a physiological test or a chemical test, or test by the microscope or telescope. When

we employ the scientific process we mean that things are tested by a procession of thought from the fact to the conclusion, not from a supposition back to the fact. The scientific method is applied in religion. The scientific method is the only safe method to apply. So we have welcomed science. I do not believe there has been a man of us, in all these one hundred years that have gone by, that has written a single book or preached a single sermon or said a single word to reconcile science to religion. We have been reconciling theology to the facts of the universe, because theology is only the more or less scientific statement of our conclusions concerning facts. Every man stands fronting two sets of phenomena in the world: one set, the phenomena of the material universe; the other, the phenomena of the spiritual universe. Why should he suppose for a moment that he can adjust himself to the material universe in terms consistent with his well-being as a creature without also, by the same endeavour and purpose, adjusting himself to the spiritual universe as a child of God? The two things go together, and the separation of them has been the reproach of the churches. Take any group assembled to discuss the revision of a Confession of Faith.

With the best intentions in the world, with absolute sincerity, with all the honour of the Church in their keeping, why should there be any question among them as to an ancient document, if it can be stated in terms level to the facts of modern life? I believe in the continuity of Christian thought, and these ancient formulæ are part of the history of the ecclesiastical development of the world; but they have no sanctity except the sanctity which went into the lives that made them and the sincerity of purpose that produced them; and I should think that a group of men of God, gathered together over the question as to whether they should revise the formulæ of religion in the terms of modern thought and the necessities of the modern mind, would aspire to just one thing, and that is, to be for their generation as sincere as the people that made the formulæ they are investigating; and if they were as sincere as that they would give us a different thing. The absolute sincerity of the Fathers is unquestioned. The absolute sincerity of the Constitutional Convention of 1787 is unquestioned; but that did not hinder the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, that gave four millions of slaves their rights as citizens. And yet there were people in the

days following the Civil War who talked about the invasion of the Constitution, as though it were to be thought of in the same moment with the invasion of human rights! When you erect a document into a fetich, you are simply in a retarded state of spiritual development; between the lower orders of civilisation, with a fetich or an amulet or a totem, there is not much to choose as compared with those who take a document or a statement which, in its day, was a very Ark of the Covenant to sincere souls, and who say: "For all time this is to abide. The human mind has learned many a thing, but concerning these things it has stood absolutely still." That is an inconceivable state of mind to us; and, whilst we always assume the sincerity of those who hold it, we lament the loss of time and spiritual power.

We have also built up, not only this courage of the human race, as far as they have heard and believed our word, we not only hold this open-minded attitude toward the progress of the human mind, but we have insisted upon the dignity of human nature. When Dr. Channing, in 1819, in Baltimore, set the dignity of human nature over against the total depravity of man, challenging the doctrine of total depravity of the race by the doctrine of

the dignity and divinity of human nature, it was as notable as any Declaration of Independence ever penned; for it was the statement that God had not made a thing of which He need be ashamed. Now of the doctrine of total depravity you say, "Nobody believes it." Well, perhaps not, for himself. I have never met a man who thought he was totally depraved. I have seen some people who gave ample signs of it to the external ohserver,—abnormal specimens, distorted and morbid developments,—but those we relegate at once to the field of imperfect development or misdirected development. So I suppose that no one for himself or for anybody he loved ever believed in total depravity. And we insist that the field of the world cannot be planted with seed that is rotten to the core. Farmers are beginning to put their seed into the ground and to get ready their gardens for the summer, and they are throwing out of the heap of their seed potatoes every one that is rotten to the core. You cannot grow a crop of any kind—men, or any other crop—out of stuff that is totally depraved. And when the Church declared its belief in total depravity, and then started to live up to its faith in total depravity, it reproached God and entered upon a dis-

pensation of despair. And here was the terrible thing that happened: they began to think meanly of God, because they thought so meanly of man. The rescue of the character of God has to be achieved in the terms of the dignity of man. A Being that made man so that He could not save him, or must enter into an immoral contract to save him, which all theories of the Atonement in some aspect are liable to involve,—the Being who is thus limited has lost more from His own character in the minds of His worshippers, than man has lost of character by the formulated statement of his depravity. We have insisted upon the dignity of human nature,—that we are children of the great God and we belong to Him; that He cannot get rid of us; that He brought us into being and is accountable for us; that our business is to grow into His image and be like Him; that moral health is salvation; and to conform to the image of His son, to the likeness of his moral qualities,—this constitutes the Atonement. And this conviction we have built up in spite of every effort to the contrary; so that in all the churches to-day, the doctrine of a cureless hell, of an inextinguishable retribution, has disappeared, except in very remote districts and very uninformed minds.

The Universalist Church was built upon the protest against the doctrine of irremediable ruin. The Unitarians took the other side of the same proposition, and claimed that the character of God forbade the ruin of man; so that when Charles Carroll Everett uttered the phrase which has passed into a commonplace in our thinking, that "Human nature is not ruined, but incomplete," it carried immediate conviction. Is it not evident that on that basis we are ready to begin any work and do anything for the betterment of our kind? But if humanity be totally depraved, then the sooner it is snuffed out the better. You cannot keep an unremedied and contagious disease in contact with the race without hurting it; and if that be the condition of God's creatures, there is no remedy that we know except extinction; that would make it safe for the Elect; and that was the doctrine of predestination reduced to its crudest form;—if that be true, then I want to go with the other folk. I have been spending the thirty years of my ministry trying to look out for the "under dog" in the fight, for the man who was not quite up to the mark, and for the man who needed help and teaching; and if God has just a few who are to be saved,

then I would wish to go with the crowd. But we do not have to come to that conclusion. The dignity of human nature is shown in every aspect of human life. In the ministry of the last thirty years, surprises as to the dignity of human nature have come upon me again and again; from the most unexpected sources the beauty of human life has appeared, as when one stands surprised at the radiant beauty of a cactus-bloom that grows out of the thorny plant. The dignity and divinity of human nature we insist upon; and it were better to have human nature divine in character and no God in the universe; the ideals which it follows true, and no God to match them, if that philosophic proposition were possible, than to have a Being of whom it could be said, as Browning wrote:

> "The loving worm within his clod
> Were diviner than a loveless God
> Within his worlds."

We are as much concerned with saving the character of God as with glorifying and dignifying the nature of man.

The Unitarian faith has built up another thing, the truth of Inspiration from God; and thus it has built up not itself alone, but has joined the great company of those who are

building up a confidence in the revelation of God's Word. We do not restrict it to the Bible of the Old and New Testament. There are world-scriptures. The great ethnic scriptures of the world are to be consulted. In my own judgment as a student, they are not to be compared in richness and power with the ethical passion of the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Scriptures. But they are deliverances of God to the Hindu, to the Mohammedan, to the Zoroastrian, and the great company of those of whom it is said, "He hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us." We have declared for that study of the Scripture, that "Higher Criticism," which has practically restored the study of the Bible to the intelligent mind of man and has made it possible for him to inquire, not for the infallible Word of God, as you would go to a book of infallible statutes; but as to what God said in the ancient time to His children; he is thus encouraged to wait and listen for what God shall say to him. And that is the doctrine of the New Testament. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read:

"God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son." And this element of devotion to the life of Christ as the revealer in terms of humanhood of the life of God, is pre-eminent amongst us.

Finally. We have built up character and practical achievement. It would be a stupid man or woman who would turn from these pages and say that I declared that there was no character formed by the other faiths. That needs no answer; it is simply not true. What I say is that the character that is formed in spite of these beliefs is formed under difficulties that we whose character is formed because of our beliefs, do not have to encounter. If I have to love God in spite of a cureless hell, I am in a very different position intellectually and morally from loving God because of an unfathomable mercy. If I have to follow Jesus of Nazareth as a composite being made up of God and man in terms I cannot define, whose human nature presents no validity for me, because it is a human nature I do not possess, and whose divine inspiration presents no validity to me, because it is different from anything that I can have,—then my

attitude toward him as the leader and helper of my life must be entirely different from what it is now, when the processes we call divine are translated in terms of an absolute humanhood, simple humanity, pure humanity, daily living as a means of learning the Beatitudes. So that when I say we build up character, I mean to say this: that we do not ask a human being to go through the convulsions of some fictitious repentance for sins he never committed and lay claim upon an atonement which can only save if the field of its operation is in another mind and not in his own, and then to be adopted into the family of God, whose child he always was, and to have a hope of Heaven based upon a work done for him by the Saviour of the world, and to think that part of his joy there will be in seeing the sufferings of the damned. If that is my attitude, then any character I get in that process I get in spite of it; and it is a tribute to the essential soundness of human nature that such beautiful character, such glorified character is possible to those who believe all those things. There is something in human nature that you cannot kill by theologic statement. There is something in human nature that resists the poison of

vicious suggestion, just as there is something in every man and woman that leads him and her to go through a vicious world untouched by its sin and uncorrupted by its influence. We build up character in the terms of the Fatherhood of God and of the dignity of human nature and by the direct approach of the soul to God, unmediated and alone, and this we call practical religion.

CHAPTER XI

HOW CAN RELIGION BE TAUGHT?

SOME confusion must necessarily arise in any contemplative mind when the word religion is pronounced; because the religions are many, and religion is but one. The churches are many, and there has been a battle of the churches in order that only one may be left. For it would seem that there could be no other motive for ecclesiastical contention, unless it were to kill off the remainder and have the survival of—the one that was left; I cannot say "the fittest," because the contention in which they were engaged was not fit for the Church of the living God. So some confusion always must appear in a contemplative mind when the word religion is uttered. It sees tribal religions which are bounded by the periphery of the tribe's own existence. It opens the Scripture of the Old Testament, and finds that Israel passed through three distinct phases of its sense of God. There was the time when

Yahweh—Jehovah—was only a tribal deity. There was the time when he was the great Deity,—tribal still, but greater than all the rest, and subduing them unto his own rule; and there was the final conception of God as the Lord of the whole earth. There were also adumbrations of what we now hold to be universal religion; that is, religion which, under all its aspects, is one in essence. As we say of Nature, that there is but one energy and all forces are but modes of its manifestation, and count it now an axiom to say that; so in religion we say there is but one religion, and all religions are modes of its manifestation.

So we come to feel that a definition of religion is necessary. We turn to the great exponents of the root thoughts of the human mind, and we come upon such a definition as this of Goethe: "All religions have one aim, —to make man accept the inevitable." But there is no delight in that; and if there is any purpose in religion, it must be to add zest to life by putting life into right relations, so that that which belongs to it shall come to it; and that power of reserve shall be in it, that not only stoically accepts the inevitable, but splendidly prepares for the next stage in life's development. So that Goethe's definition that "All

religions have one aim,—to make man accept the inevitable," does not provide for development; it provides only for defence; and if I am simply in the attitude of defending myself against the gods, then I am in a very primitive form of religious thought. For that is one of its early aspects. The gods are inimical to human joy, and the purpose of being on terms with them is not to let them have their way with me. Therefore that cannot be a definition of religion, for it does not provide for delight and for development.

Frederic Harrison's statement is, that "Religion is summed up in duty." But I can have no duty to God. God is the source of every aspect of duty in me. His life would go on if I were utterly regardless of Him. Not so the life of my fellow. It does not go on unless I help it. Therefore, in this definition, you must separate religion from ethics. It is not summed up in duty. It is not even summed in love that is without duty, and it certainly cannot be measured by duty without love.

Or again, with the deference that we feel toward everything that John Morley writes, we read this definition in his estimate of what religion is: "By holiness do we not mean something different from virtue? It is not the same

as duty. Still less is it the same as religious belief. It is the name of the inner grace of nature, an instinct of the soul, by which, though knowing earthly appetites and passions, the spirit, purifying itself by itself, and independent of reason, argument, and the struggles of the will, dwells in loving, patient, and confident communion with the seen and the unseen good." Now there is much, very much, of truth in that. It is beautifully stated. It is fine. But it is just a little too fine. For it is abstruse, involved, prolix, and cannot be explained to the uneducated; and any definition of religion that cannot be explained to the least instructed cannot be explained anywhere satisfactorily. The Bowery must have a definition, as well as the upper ranges of what we vainly and idly call "society."

There is also this difficulty with Mr. Morley's definition, that he says religion is independent of reason; whereas reason is the supreme court before which it is tried. If it is not rational, then it is not for rational beings. We can no longer say in one mood of Tertullian, "I believe it because it is impossible." We say rather in the other mood of Tertullian, "The soul divines what is divine." It is said by Mr. Morley "that holiness is

independent of the struggles of the will." But the struggle of the will is part of holiness itself. It is not a temperature that comes upon you without sharing in the will. It is not a mere condition of temperament, even, in which the will has no part. So I think we must examine a little more closely as to what religion is before we can say how it may be taught.

I call your attention, therefore, to three stages, briefly expressed, which must enter as contributory to the conception of religion at all. The first is the sense of dependence. This may be expressed as "Man and God,"—the sense of obligation. I can have no duty toward God, but I have a duty from God toward the other man. The race passes from its childhood to its adolescence, in which, as in the individual, egotism is replaced by altruism, and the love of self is followed by the love of the other. When we get to the great "Other," who is God, the original "Other," the prototype, the archetypal pattern of all that is, then we find ourselves in a realm of dependence upon God as source, and the aspect of religion cannot be avoided that, It consists in a relation of dependence of man upon God. For instance: the man who is

so trivial or superficial as to say that there is no God; the man who has not read much in the last twenty years; who has made no intelligent study of physical science; who is not familiar with the natural world; who therefore has not passed that period known as "philosophical atheism"; that man, by the very struggle to be independent and alone, gives a negative argument for his dependence, by the struggle it costs him to reach his independent attitude. So the sense of dependence is elementary to religion; but it makes no provision for an enlarged experience, and most of all it makes no provision for an unexpected crisis, which, unless the soul be related to God, it is conscious of bearing alone. Our lives are a succession of catastrophes if we are alone; they are a succession of experiences if we are bound up in the bundle of life with Him. To be alone would be a tragedy in life's catastrophes.

There is a second condition contributory to religion. Not only must there be the sense of dependence, which may be expressed as "Man *and* God," but there must be the sense of relation, which may be expressed as "Man *like* God." The effort of religion growing out of dependence is to build a bridge

between man and God, or to run a tunnel, a subway, under the superficial aspects of life, by which there is a means of communication between us and God. This rises at last to the conception that not only am I dependent upon God because I am helpless; but I am related to God because I am like Him; I share His nature. In the fourth century, Athanasius made a statement which was afterward hardened into dogma, instead of allowing it to remain fluent as poetry; he declared that "The Son is not of like substance with the Father, but the Son is of the same substance with the Father"; he had a great revelation of the fact that there is but one ground of being in the world, and that no son can ever be other than of the same substance with the father. So when Jesus says in his splendid phrase, "I and my Father are one," he is not stating a mathematical identity; he is stating a moral coalescence; he is stating just what all the prismatic rays are stating, divided into their rainbow hues through the great primordial colours; suddenly the prism is taken away, and you stand in white light. It is optical coalescence; it is the coalescence of colours. "I and my Father are one" is the statement of a relation that may be expressed, whether by

Christ or by any humblest follower of his, or any meditative soul that never heard of him, as "Man *with* God." That is essential to religion.

The third condition contributory to religion is, not only dependence, or man and God; not only relation, as man with God; but a sense of common purpose, namely, "Man for God," as the instrument of His manifestation, as the medium in which He works. Does the sculptor take the clay; does the painter take the pigments; does the musician wish for his instrument; does the great violin-maker say God could not make it without him? So in every aspect of life the sense of common purpose is seen. "We are workers together with God." We are not only His husbandry, as Paul says; we are not only His building; we are not only the product of His creative power; not only so, but He never has stopped creating, has never got done with what He was doing; and He has left us some little fragments of work that we may do, so that we may not be idle in a world which is not yet done. If the universe is not yet finished, it behooves us to have a share in the making of it. Every shiver of an earthquake is testimony to the cooling of a planet that has

not yet cooled enough for man's safety. We have our contribution to make; and religion that is not "Man *for* God" has missed one essential element in it.

The first contribution, Man *and* God, which takes the form of dependence, is expressed in the statement made by a woman who was talking to a friend a little while ago. One said to the other, "Why do you go to such a church, where the mythological aspect of the service certainly affronts your reason?" Her friend answered: "I go there when I want to bite the dust; because every condition of the service implies that God is everything and man nothing,—a mere insect, ephemeral in to-day's radiance, floating in the sunshine of the divine outpouring." That was the impression the service made upon her mind; and so when she got into an abnormal state of continued repentance, a kind of serial repentance that is "continued in our next issue," she went to that service because she wanted to "bite the dust." That is primitive religion devising mythology to satisfy its own sense of dependence.

The second contribution is found in the higher aspects of religion. It is found, as I have intimated, in the life of Christ, whose

"great renunciation" is as real as that of Gotama Buddha; greater indeed, for sweeter and higher and more full of joy—the great renunciation of Jesus was as full of dependence on God as one can conceive: and yet it was the statement that all union with the Ultimate Divine was meant to be a preparation for carrying out the divine ideal which that union had procured. Brought into the circle of the Divine Presence, "thinking God's thoughts after Him," there grows up in the soul a divine ideal. I must realise it, and make it plain in the terms of common life; and so you get to the third element, Man *for* God.

The soul is dependent, as I have implied, for inspiration, not for rescue. For religion is not a process of insurance. The Being who could devise in the human soul a plan by which it was to be insured against Himself would require to take out a policy that would cover the Infinite; for nothing under that aspect would require so complete an insurance as God. That would be the terrible thing about it, that the smallest of all God's sentient and rational creatures being at risk from the Being that made him would be an imputation directly upon the Being Who made

him as being non-moral, or immoral. That is our protest. We are not dependent upon God simply for rescue, but for inspiration. We look to Him for revelation; we want to have Him made plain. "No man hath seen God at any time. The only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father hath declared Him." You can imagine all men near-sighted, never having seen a star, and then the world coming in procession to the telescope and revealing the new heavens,—the sidereal heavens made plain to a near-sighted world. This is just what happened in Jesus Christ. Men had not any view of God that would satisfy until they learned it, apprehended it, had it made plain in terms of a human life. That was the lens through which God showed Himself to the eye that searched for Him.

In "Man *for* God," I think we get a very simple definition of religion,—that it is a passionate devotion to the will of God. Here I outline what I mean by the teaching of religion. Take this definition, which seems to me enough, that *religion is a passionate devotion to the will of God.* To teach religion is not to teach its definitions. When a clergyman a little while ago said to me, "I cannot

conceive how religion can be taught without a catechism or a formulated statement," I said to him, "Cannot you teach cooking without a cook-book? Cannot you teach carpentry without a treatise upon mechanics? Cannot the living soul that knows a thing show how it knows it without defining the terms in which it knows it? Do I require a chemical analysis of my luncheon, in order to know that it is palatable? Serve up your dinner with a chemical analysis, and see how much you would eat at the end of the week. You would dread the chemical analysis more than you would want the dinner. The prescription is not the medicine; the theory is not the fact; the definition is not religion. We give the definition of religion as "a passionate devotion to the will of God,"—but in this religion does not appear as having a definition of what God is, nor how the will is related to Him, nor what we mean by devotion,—whether saying prayers or praying, whether reciting a creed or living it. It does not require a definition of the primary passions of life to know what a passionate devotion to the will of God is. There are four volumes of metaphysic enclosed in that sentence: the first having to do with the primary passions of human nature; the second with the rites of

religion as formed in devotion; the third with the ethic of the soul; and the fourth with a theologic statement of the theory of God. You might have all that in the terms of every seminary in the world that teaches what it calls a "body of divinity";—that is, it lays upon the dissecting-table the dead form of Religion, and calls the class round for a clinic,—you might have all that, and be just as free from all religion as some of the seminaries are. One man, at least, should be kept in the faculty of every Theological School who has an enthusiasm for the pastoral office, and knows the souls of men in the active work of the ministry. Why? Because it is absurd for a theological school to be made up simply of academic instruction. That is necessary. You must have the study of church history for the sake of the history and not for the sake of the church. You must have all that goes with the whole curriculum of a well-equipped theological school. But there must be in all such schools human souls that have a passionate devotion to the will of God. I do not say that definition is not useful. I do not say that when you want to draw a line around things you have not to define them; but I shall never be convinced, I think,—at

least in my present condition of rationality,—that the survey of a field is a substitute for the crop you can get out of it. So we must have something else than definition in the teaching of religion. There must be the statement, as I have said, of the phenomena of religion; as, for instance, in thinking of the Being of God. Let me use that as an illustration. It would seem that "He that cometh to God must believe that He is." That is fundamental. It is not important at all as to the fact of religion, but it is as to the character of it, what God seems to him to be like. "He that cometh to Him must believe that He is"; or else he is going on a fool's errand. He is not going at all; he is simply wandering around. He is simply a lunatic outside bounds. "He that cometh to God must *believe that He is.*" What I maintain, as I have said, is that the fact of religion is not dependent upon his determining *what God is exactly like.*

An elder in a recent session of the Presbyterian Assembly rose in his place and made this speech: "How do we know that God could save the race? We do not know. If God had said, 'I propose to save the whole human race,' Satan would have risen in his

place, there and then, and would have said, 'That is just what I told Eve, Ye shall not surely die.'" Now, I can believe easily, that he was a good man, in spite of this foolish statement. The statement is foolish, because it is a bit of mythology flung into the face of the twentieth century. It is based upon the first chapter of the Book of Job, where God is represented as an Eastern sovereign, a Shah of Persia, with provinces, outlying districts, and satraps of these provinces bringing in their reports. So the first chapter of the Book of Job opens, "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them." Then the book goes on to say that they made their various reports, and the Being, the Shah of Persia, is represented as saying, "There is a man in my province, Job. Hast thou considered him? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man." Then they have a dialogue about Job; and Satan proposes certain tests of Job's goodness. He says, "He is a rich man, a prosperous man; but if his goods are taken away, he will renounce thee." And his wealth was taken away; but Job blessed God. Then Satan said, "Lay thy hand upon his body, and

he will renounce thee." So Job was afflicted in sore ways; and he still blessed God. In the midst of it all he said, "I know that my Avenger liveth; and that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth; and after my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet from my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." This was the mold in which the Presbyterian elder's thought about God was cast.

The effort of this good man to say what God was like did not invalidate the fact of religion in him at all. It only impaired his usefulness as a teacher of theology. In other words, a man out of the Middle Ages cannot have a chair in a theological school in the twentieth century with advantage to the school. Here was a group concerned with the revision of the Westminster Confession, and for that reason the thing that was said was perfectly apt to the occasion; for one form of mythology was matched with another. It is the illustration of what Froude says so splendidly: "Reason is no match for superstition; one great emotion must be expelled by another." What God is like is subject for debate. What God is, and that God is, is subject for the soul's apprehension and adoration.

In order to the teaching of religion, then, in any real way, there is but one thing to be considered, namely, the giving of direction to the temper and spirit of the taught. It involves a crystalline sincerity. That is the first step. A crystalline sincerity, an unclouded eye to see, an ear hospitable to every voice that has anything to say that means good,— this implies a teachable spirit. Unwillingness to be convinced is the beginning of perdition to the soul. There must be an open-minded hospitality, so that light may enter into the mind.

Two other elements enter into the condition of this directed mind; not only that it shall be teachable, willing to know, not only that it shall be sincere, with clear vision, when the thing to be known is presented; but there must be in it earnestness. Men demand easy religion! Nothing else is easy in life. Ask the man of whom you speak as having life on his own terms, whether life is on his own terms or not. Ask him what anxieties corrode his mind, what solicitudes perplex him; what embarrassments impede him. He will tell you there is no life that is easy, and it ought not to be. As in the natural world the struggle is the process of survival,

so in the moral world it is struggle of soul that saves.

Finally, there must be an unselfish devotion. Without teachableness we have no advance. Without crystalline sincerity we have no self-knowledge. Without earnestness we have no momentum. Without unselfish devotion we have no usefulness. Whatever you acquire in the name of religion is only taken to your mint to be put into the current coin of the realm. It must go into circulation thereafter. It is the thing men trade in and need for the sustenance of life.

The teaching of religion depends, most of all, upon the impact of one nature, upon another. Over and over again I hear the teachers in Sunday-school say, "I remember a teacher whom I had in my early boyhood or girlhood. I cannot remember more than her name. I do not remember anything she ever taught me; but somehow or other she made me believe that God was real, and that God was known to her." That is the impact of one spiritual nature on another. That is essential in the teaching of religion. The most brilliant discourse is as vain as the most flippant language, unless the discourse carries with it the sense that the man has contact

with divine realities. When Bunsen lay dying, looking into his wife's face, he said, "In thy face have I seen the Eternal." That was what John meant in his Gospel about making God plain in terms of human flesh. You remember, in *Robert Elsmere*, how the dying workman called Robert to his side and told him how he had made him, by the very aspect of his life, believe in God; that is to be the revealer of God in terms of human life.

Many persons have been thrilled to hear Robert Collyer tell how, after he had come into the Unitarian ministry, he went back to Yorkshire, and preached to the congregation in which his aged mother sat, who had never heard him preach since the days when he was a Methodist. She took his arm going home from church, and gave it that little hug that mothers will, and said to him, "Ah, Rabbie! I didna understand much thee said, and what I did understand I didna like; but I believe in thee." That is the real thing. "I believe in thee!" That is what Paul meant when he said, "Whose I am, and whom I serve." That is what he meant when he said, "Faithful is he that called you, who also will do it." That is what he meant when he said, "All things work together for good to

them that love God." That is the final conviction in the teaching of religion. It is the impact of a believing soul upon the soul which seeks to believe.

CHAPTER XII

HOW TRADITIONAL RELIGION MAY BECOME PERSONAL

JESUS among his people stood in the midst of institutions hoary with age, himself a youth, vital with spiritual consciousness. They quoted against his enthusiasm the age-long antecedents of their cult, and he challenged them to show that they were operative in the achievements of the spiritual life.

The process is historic, as well as individual, in which, through all time, the passage has to be made from the speculative reason to the practical reason before we are sure of any one thing. The speculative reason is the field of our gymnastic; the practical reason is the arena of our conflict and the opportunity of our work. This was what Jesus continually contended for. The woman of Samaria, a woman without character, said, in absolute devotion to the orthodoxy of her religion, which had not touched her life in any way:

"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." That is traditional religion asserting itself through the lips of an immoral person, and absolutely correct in its differentiation between "this mountain" and that, between this "worship" and that; and the reply of the Master of the art of living, the simple man whose chivalry did not even abash her, nor send her other than repentant away, was: "Neither in this mountain nor yet in Jerusalem shall men worship the Father. The Father seeketh them to worship Him who worship Him in spirit and in truth." It is the passage from traditional religion to personal experience. It is the problem which Luther solved when, toiling on his knees up the great stair,—a stair built on the treads and uprights of traditional religion—he heard a voice in his ear that said: "The just shall live by his faith." He arose from the toiling on his knees to the activities of his life, turned his back upon the monastery and upon the cloister, and entered into marriage and work and beneficence as a man and not a priest.

For religion in its last analysis is personal, not traditional. It is traditional in that it may be carried across from age to age. It is

traditional, for instance, in the Philippine Islands, where every question yet of personal religion and of national ethics is to be solved. The friars own the land, and the people do not own themselves. It is traditional in those great Catholic belts of Southern America, in which every punctilio of service is observed, but where civilisation languishes for want of humanness. It is observed if you would go to an audience with the Pope of Rome. You would be inquired of, not whether you believed in the personal sanctity of Leo XIII., in which we must all in large measure believe who know of the devotion and sympathies of this beautiful old man; but you would be asked by the master of ceremonies if you understood "the etiquette of the occasion." The etiquette of the occasion does not mean that you shall accept the vicar of the Most High as a person charged with a message to you. It means that the women must go veiled, and the whole company must kneel when the Pope enters his audience chamber, and if he is gracious enough to present his signet they must kiss it. This is traditionalism.

So, throughout the whole world, the effort of man has been to put himself into actual

relations with the universe, and he does so when he leaves the pages of the past in which that effort is inscribed. He reads there the history of religion, the history that followed its traditions, that is made up in part of what it did and in part of what it dreamed; but no man finds his adjustment to the universe in the pages of history. To recite trippingly upon the tongue some creed of the past may be most useful, as putting you in line with the continuity of religious thought. But it is quite possible to say the things impossible to believe, and a useful exercise goes on in all sensitive souls in the recitation of the forms of faith, — a translation out of the archaic phraseology, reciting the phraseology of the past in the terms of present emotion and of present faith. So that when a clergyman of a New York church was asked, "How, in view of the fact that you believe in the essential humanity of Jesus of Nazareth, are you able to recite the Apostles' Creed?" he answered: "I say to myself, 'who is *said to have been* conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary.'" That parenthetic process goes on all the time. Into that interval of the parenthesis dropped the sincerities of his life. Into the chasm in his thinking dropped

the directness of his mind; for the passage from traditionalism to personal religion must be made, no matter where you start. You may start at the antipodes, of the Catholic Church upon the one side, and at very liberalism upon the other; but still, what relation do you own to the Infinite? That is the problem set for all of us. It is the source of the soul's struggle. It is the major premise in all the soul's argument with life.

I do not for one moment lose sight of the thought side of religion; but the thought side of religion cannot be a thought quoted without ceasing from intellectual eminence. Emerson said, very well, that next to him who uttered a great thought was the man who quoted it. But to be perpetually in quotation is to be ever in process of rehearsing tradition. The tradition preserves that which constitutes the background of our thinking; it is not thinking itself. It *was* thought; but it *is* not thought, you perceive. Whatever creed is stated, the moment any man says, "Credo," "I believe," he is in active, intellectual, moral, spiritual process; but the next man who says, "I believe," and quotes him, does not say the same thing at all. He says: "I believe what the other man believed," and

he is one remove away from that warm centre of conviction which in the first man made the statement of his faith. Take, for instance, the creed called the "Creed of Nicæa," begun in 325 in the Council of Nicæa, and formulated and completed in 380 in the Council of Constantinople. Examine that statement. I do not intend to controvert any element in it. I believe profoundly that the enunciation of it saved the Christian Church, as I could prove to you by a most simple process. When it was declared that the Son was of the "same substance" with the Father, the first utterance was made which modern thought expresses in the integrity of all life and the essence of all life. It was a wonderful declaration. Not Arius, but Athanasius saved the Church. But when the modern man, dusty with his business, brushes himself off and goes to church, or shifts his business suit for his holy cloak, and goes into the place of prayer, and begins to recite the Creed of Nicæa, he is not at all conscious of the struggle that went to the making of it, — how, in that convention of ecclesiastics, blows were struck and oaths were uttered, and anger was hot for the integrity of the faith. He is trying to put into his Occidental way of

thinking, into his Western mind, a philosophic statement produced largely under Asiatic conditions; for of the 318 bishops and ecclesiastics that constituted the Council of Nicæa, only some twelve or fifteen were from the West of Europe. It is a philosophy of religion that he is reciting, and you can imagine, as he stands there and recites the Nicene Creed without much thought, able sometimes to remember what it really is, and most often reading it from the book,—as he stands there, you can imagine the surprise of all the martyrs that died for the truth, and all the angels that attended their flight from earth, to see a modern man reciting a philosophic formula, of which he has never weighed one syllable perhaps in all his days, and calling it an exercise of personal religion! It is quite possible for him to make that personal,—quite possible for him to apprehend what Athanasius was struggling for, and enter into that struggle of soul. If he can believe it, and adjust it to his life, and make it practical in his common affairs, he has solved one problem in religion,—he has passed from traditionalism to personal experience. But you have not in that creed, nor in any other, so far as I know,—a statement of personal religion. I do not know in

one of them anything that can be parallelled with the Beatitudes, which deal with life and its blessedness. The creeds deal with thought and its accuracy; and between the blessedness of life, the beatitude of experience, and accuracy of statement, there is all the difference between the rosy child that is so full of life your arms can scarcely hold him while you love him, and the placid and statuesque perfection of the dead.

"The soul divines what is divine," said Tertullian in one of his better moments. "The soul divines what is divine." And our modern statement of it is, "That is inspired which inspires."

I am not for one moment to be understood as declaring against the traditions of religion. I simply say they are not religion's self. They are useful, as the museums are useful, as the history of the literature of the world is useful; but between the living creature, that looks at the preserved specimen in the museum, and the fossil itself are all the diameters that we mean by life,—so wide that they cannot be compared by their measurement together. The living child, wondering before the great restored fossil creature, that after being exhumed has been set up in its

skeleton as it was in antediluvian days,— the living child standing wondering at it, is greater than the thing at which it looks; because all history — is implicit in the child, and this other has been left a remainder from the past. The skeleton dug up and a history in process are things so different that one can scarcely compare them together.

One grows weary of the people who have the theory of things; — the great dramatic critic who cannot write a line that anybody can play on the stage; the great musical critic whom you would dismiss, that you might hear an old darky sing with his mellow voice, into which generations of tears have gone, and the agony of his people; a minister of religion, whom you are glad to detect in any useful employment; you follow him up with detective exaction, and, beyond the theories of the philosophy of religion which he may have, you at last discover him in the practice of the things that he preaches; in all these instances we find the passage from traditionalism to what is personal and immediate.

What do we mean by personal religion? Religion is a passion, a devotion to the will of God. It does not much matter what the god is called, or how his will is conceived,

or what degree of passion is maintained, so that the soul have passion, devotion to the will of God. For it is our relationships that matter, not the definition of what those relationships should be. Better give one's self absolutely to worship than to be most eminently wise about idols, and go from one pedestal to another until one's fancy is pleased with a god. That is not worship; that is not devotion; there is no passion in that. That is fooling with an æsthetic sense in the name of a great process in human life. It is for this reason that Calvin and Theodore Parker are equally admirable in their attitude and relation to that which they believed. Theodore Parker said he agreed with Calvin perfectly, for Calvin's God was his devil. Still, the relation was exact between the being whom Calvin worshipped, and whom we abhor in his description of him, and the being whom Theodore Parker worshipped and whom we adore in his description. It is relation that is essential; and the relation, being vital, carries worth with it. Take the commonest relation of life. Marriage is an instinct based in the physical nature of the race. Marriage is a passion in which an instinct is kindled until it flames. Marriage is an ideal in which

all the basilar instincts are subordinated and sublimated at once to the service of the soul. Marriage is a beatitude, a sacrament. The Church of Rome is right in calling it one of the seven sacraments. It is a sacrament in which stand hand in hand the man and woman, and they bow themselves before God unashamed. This one word that I have used—*relation*—makes the difference from first to last.

So religion is a passionate devotion to the will of God. That is definition enough, I think. In what sense, then, is it personal? I have already intimated to you that every tradition clustered around some warm-hearted faith. The aberration from that centre of summer in the soul was when intellectual accuracy was substituted for an experience of life. That is the great heresy. The world has never entertained any heresy which for hurtful influence is like that; and that lies at the root of insistence upon traditionalism. The comical little catechism, quoted in a New York newspaper a while ago as having been put out by the Anglican Catholic clergy, represented everybody who is not in what they call the "ark of safety," with the other animals, as in the great wash of the deluge. It is a very small vessel for so large a sea,

and so many people will be drowned around it, that I think the waters will be clogged up as in the Sea of Sargasso. The heresy of it is that it insists that tradition is authority; that accurate statement is salvation; that conformity to a form of words has saving power. That is the great heresy wherever it is found in the history of the world,—that exactness of definition is reality. I have many a time called your attention in these pages to this fundamental distinction which we must maintain or be lost in our thinking: *that definition is never the thing defined.* The prescription is not even the drug, and the drug is not the cure; and yet to be wise in prescriptions makes an apothecary, who must yet take his own drugs to be cured. Definition is not mathematics, ranging from the simplest primary question of addition and so on clear to higher mathematics, where most of us get lost; and yet the wise wren builds her nest and broods her young, and the spider knows how large the door of his little hole in the ground must be to serve as a trap to pull after him when he goes in, and "nature loves the number five," and does not know why,—all innocent of mathematics, because the definition is not the reality,—the reality is the cause of the

definition. In the wide spaces of Arabia the mathematical science was born, and the heavens lent their aid to the calculations of him who in algebra and its kindred sciences sought to constitute a science under the light of the stars.

The definition is never the reality. That is the vanity of the people who say: "I am a Channing Unitarian," or, "I am a Theodore Parker Unitarian." Phillips Brooks had the right idea about that. When somebody was asked by him why she attended Trinity Church, this simpering woman said: "I do not know why, but I suppose I am a Brooksite." And he said: "Good-day, madam." That was the only answer. A Channing Unitarian, if he would read Channing, would discover that he was the most vitally and immediately religious of men. He was dealing with things as he found them, and seeking to help the age in which he lived. He was dealing with questions from Napoleon in his greed of conquest to slavery in its enormity of guilt; he dealt with the common vices and virtues of the time in which he lived, in a way that showed the living soul. That is the way to be a Channing Unitarian,—to have your soul alive to every blessed and infernal thing in sight, and seek to change the nether side of life to its beatitudes.

This must be, for the reason that all relations are personal. The moment the human consciousness arrived at the concept of personality, it set up personal relations with the universe. If you stand at all—as you must if you are aware of modern thought—for the natural function of religion, you are dealing with a part of your nature just as much as when you are learning the laws of light as related to the eye, or the laws of sound as related to the ear. You are dealing with a function of your daily life in religion. Over and over again men say to me: "I have at last come to the conclusion that I must attend to the religious side of my nature." Well, that late conclusion does them credit, for the religious side of their nature has been knocking and knocking, and asking attention. Let it be attended to! It has been whispering questions to them that nothing else answered, raising conflicts in their minds that nothing else could allay, presenting conditions of human life as they arise year by year in terms of gladness and sorrow so that nothing else could adjust them; and at last they are attending to what has been there all the time,—the religious side of their nature. I say to you with all the seriousness of which I am capable, that you cannot

neglect it without dwarfing your powers, and that that relation is a personal relation; for the reason, if I may make this plain by an illustration or two, that all the achievements of life come, sooner or later, in their highest terms, out of a conscious adjustment of the person to the nature of which he seeks to inquire. For instance, shut the eye away from light long enough, and it is blind, Keep the arm, as the Indian ascetic does, lifted toward heaven long enough, and it is paralysed. Stand with Simon Stylites on his pillar, with his rope girdle, long enough still, and decay sets in; and yet the ascetic is doing it in the name of a personal relation. What I desire to bring home to the mind of the reader with all possible directness is this: That when a human being gets down before God in prayer, or stands, as our Oriental friends would in prayer—no matter what the attitude, if the soul is going out toward its source of life, is seeking its springs in the Being that made it—when that transpires the relation is as real, as vital, and as natural, as when the eye is delighted with the first kiss of light, or the ear is delighted with the first matin song of birds, or when your child crawls into your bed in the morning and snuggles down; that is an act of personal

devotion to you out of whose being it came, and into whose arms it is folded for safety and infantile delight. I believe *in* God, but that is not enough. *I must believe God.* "I know," says the apostle, not "*in* whom I have believed," but "I know *whom* I have believed." That is personal relationship. When we speak into the ear of the Most High, we are not crying into the void. All definitions of philosophy are inapt, incomplete. The relationship between the soul and God is a relationship that must be personally realised, personally believed. No knowledge of tradition is a substitute for it, and no delight in tradition can take its place. And nothing that any human soul can do but the abandon of itself unto the Infinite, can be called in any sense the passage from traditional religion to religion that is personal. For religion is not a theory, but an experience. Religion is not a guess, but a certainty. There are theories manifold, but they are not itself. There are guesses multiform, but they are not itself. The reality is never the thing described. The soul is an explorer for reality, and its exploration is its experience, and its experience is its life. This is religion.

What is Christianity?

BY

DR. ADOLF HARNACK

RECTOR AND ORDINARY PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY, AND FELLOW OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCE, BERLIN

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